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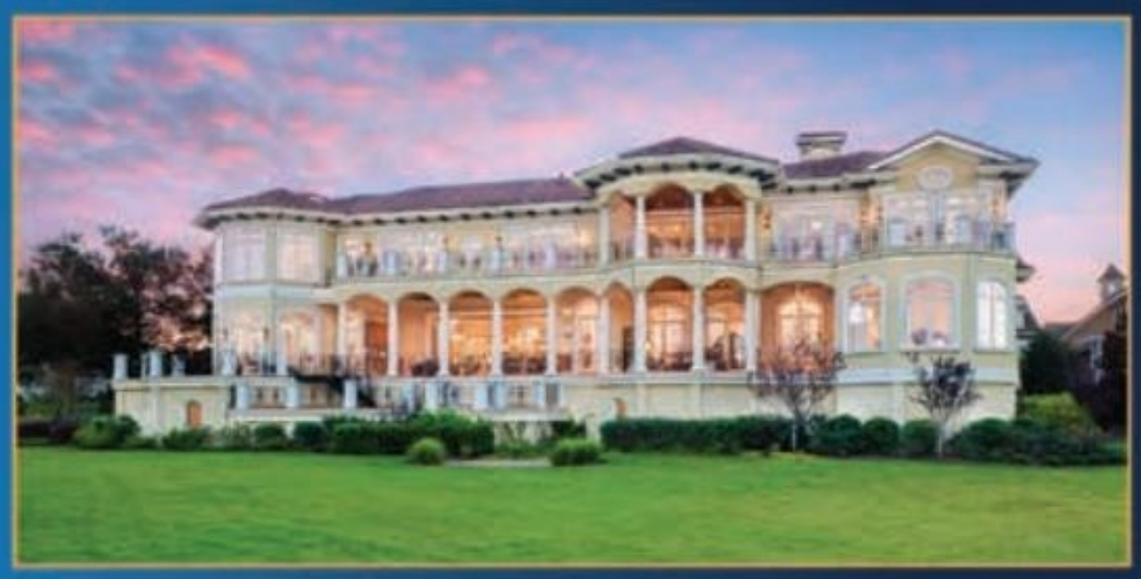

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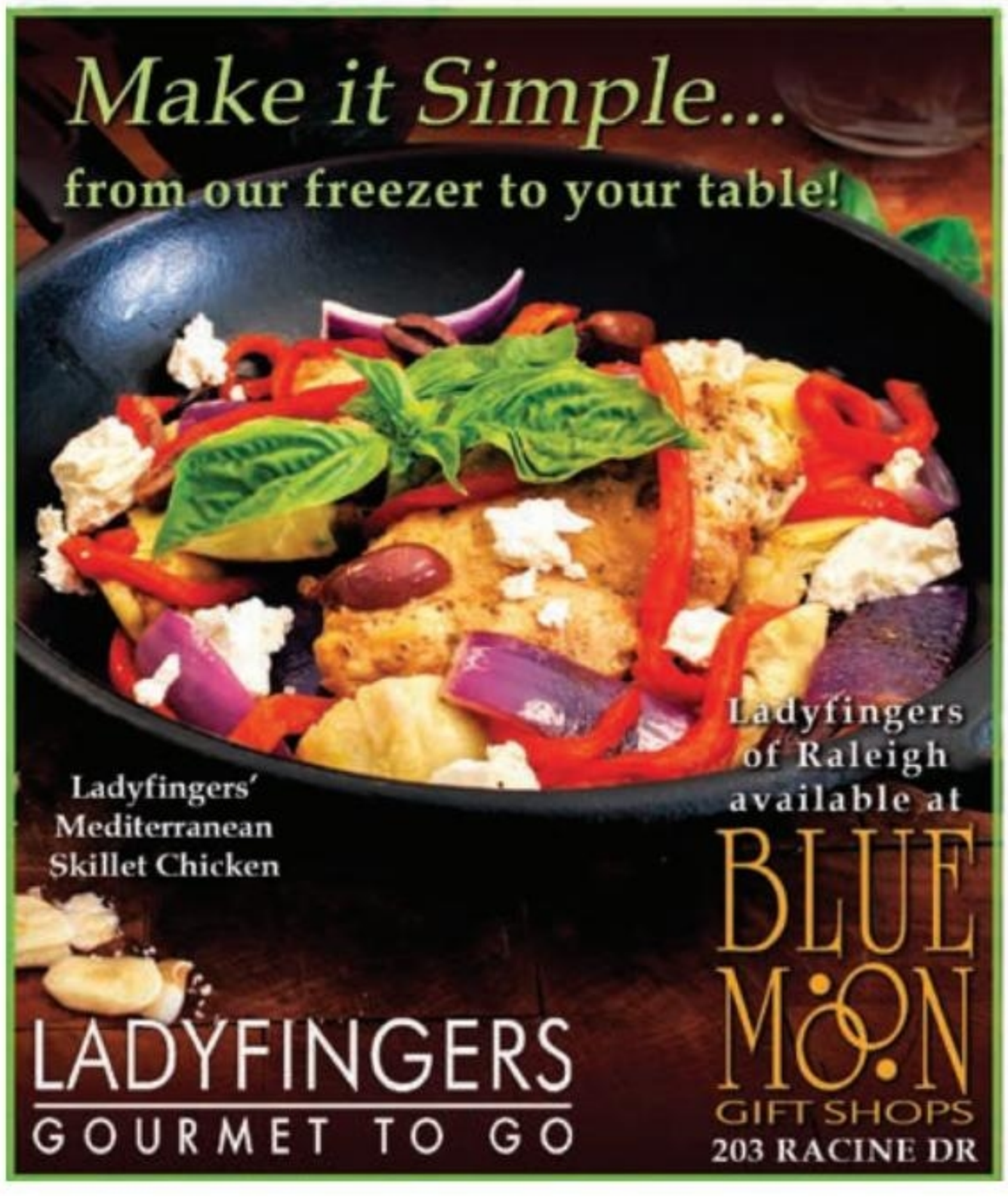
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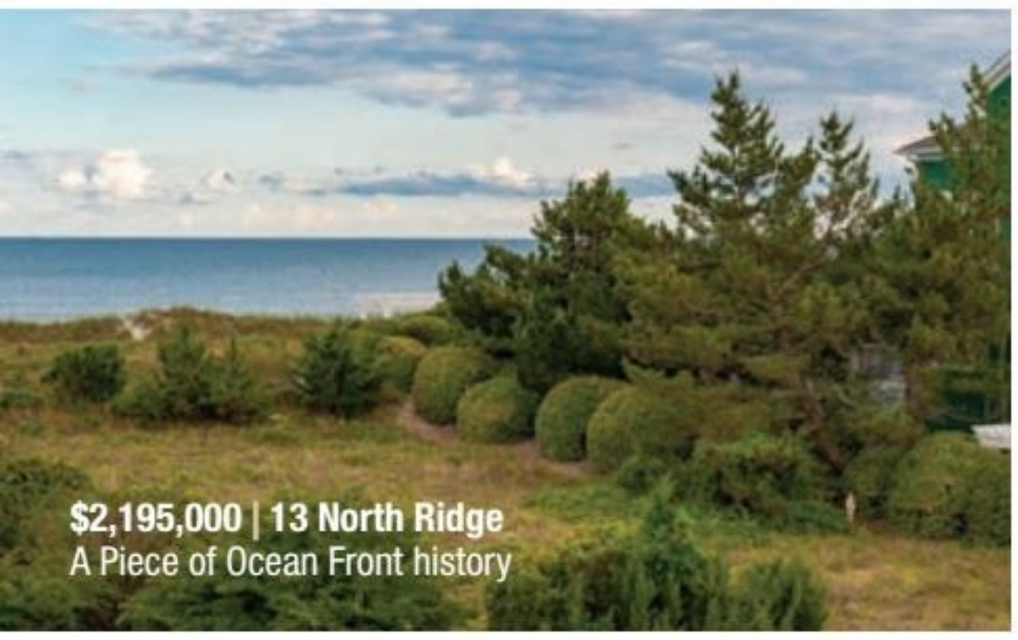

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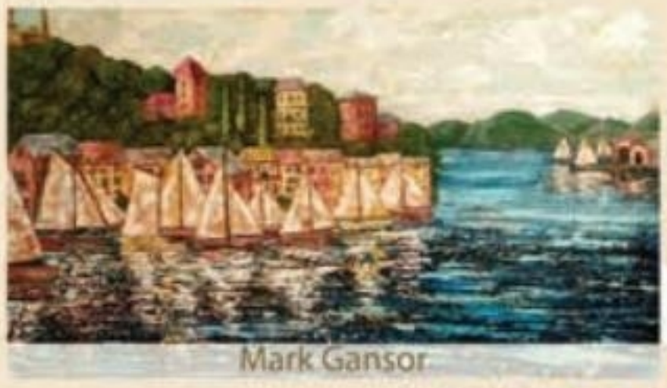
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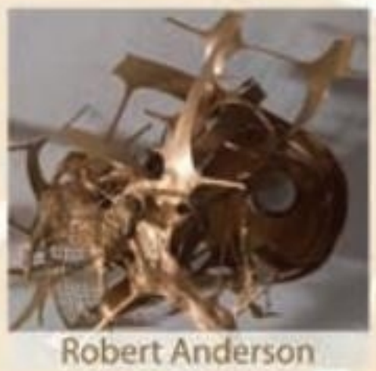
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A Beautiful Blue Marble

Finding meaning in the universe, however large or small

By Jim Dodson

While digging out an old flower bed this summer I found, of all things, a beautiful blue marble buried more than a foot deep in the earth.

I decided it was either evidence of a lost race of marble-playing pioneers or simply belonged to a kid who lost it in the dirt when our house was built. That kid would now be over 75 years old.

Either way, this beautiful blue marble, resting in the palm of my soiled palm, reminded me of an image of the planet taken by the crew of the final Apollo mission as they made their way to the Moon. The photograph was dubbed *The Blue Marble* because it revealed a fragile blue world that is home to "billions of creatures, a beautiful orb capable of fitting into the pocket of the universe," as NASA elegantly put it.

Some experts say marbles are the oldest toys on Earth, found by archeologists in the tombs of ancient Egypt and the ashes of Pompeii, mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Even America's Founding Fathers were known to play a mean game of marbles when they weren't busy forming a nation.

The earliest marbles were made of dried, molded clay. In the mid-19th century, however, a German glassblower invented a pair of special scissors that could cut and shape molten glass, making glass marbles affordable for the first time. Glass marbles quickly dominated the market, particularly after industrial machines made them more efficiently, further lowering their price. "Valued as much for their beauty as the games played with them," the National Toy Hall of Fame notes, "marbles inspired one 19th-century enthusiast to describe the twisted spiral of colored filament in glass marbles as 'thin music translated into colored glass.'"

Because my family was always on the move during my first seven years of life — following my father's newspaper career across the Deep South — I had few if any regular playmates and plenty of time to fill up on my own come endless Southern summers. Books and marbles and painted Roman armies filled those quiet hours when the air sounded roasted by cicadas. Everywhere we lived from Mississippi to South Carolina, I found myself a cool and comfortable patch of earth beneath a porch or a large tree where I played out the Pelopennesian War or shot marbles in a large ring scratched into the dirt.

I excelled at shooting marbles, often whipping my dad when he came home from work. His necktie loosened, he would come outside with a cold beer to see if I had any interest in coming to supper, squatting to play me a quick game before we went in to eat. The object of the game we played was to knock as many marbles outside the ring without having your "shooter" wind up outside as well. I forget who told me that it was good luck to play with a marble that matched the color of your eyes. Accordingly, my shooter was always blue.

I could spin and skip marbles like nobody's business in those days, and even carried a small sack of my favorites with me whenever my family went on vacation or visited elderly relatives. Politely excused, advised not to wander far, I could slip outside and find the nearest patch of earth for a little marble- shooting practice.

Then along came the spring of 1964. I watched Arnold Palmer win his final Masters green jacket on TV and began swinging a golf club in the yard, making a list of 11 things I intended to do in golf. At the top I hoped to someday meet the new King of the game.

That summer I made the Pet Dairy Little League and began reading about Brooks Robinson, the "Human Vacuum Cleaner" in the sports pages. Robinson played third base for the Baltimore Orioles. I laid hands on an official Brooks Robinson fielder's glove, vowing that in the unlikely event that I didn't grow up to be the next Arnold Palmer I might become the next "Mr. Hoover," as Robinson was also called.

In effect, I lost my marbles that summer of '64 — or at least put them away forever.

Arnie won the Masters, and Robinson had his best season offensively, hitting for a .318 batting average with 28 home runs. He also led the league with 118 runs batted in, capturing the American League's MVP Award and his fifth Gold Glove. In the American League MVP voting, Robinson received 18 of the 20 first-place votes, with Mickey Mantle of the Yankees finishing second, much to the delight of my colorful uncle Carson.

He took me to my first Major League ballgame when I got sent up in late summer to spend a week with my uncles and their German wives in Baltimore. Uncle Carson was a big Irishman who worked at a tire factory and had season tickets to "the Birds," as he fondly called them. He couldn't abide Mickey Mantle. "I'd like to knock that smug smile off that overpaid showboat's kisser," he said to me during the pre-game warm-ups as both teams took the field in Memorial Stadium.

Uncle Carson's seats were a dozen rows back along the third base line. He encouraged me to bring my new Brooks Robinson fielder's glove along because he was confident I could get it autographed by "the greatest third baseman ever."

Sure enough, when Robinson appeared on the field, stretching and chatting with other players, including several on the detested Yankees team, Uncle Carson sent me scurrying down to the dugout where a crowd of kids clustered, seeking autographs.

When Robinson ambled over, I asked him for his autograph and he smiled and said "Sure, Kid. Where you from?" At least I like to remember it this way. Honestly, I was too tongue-tied and in the throes of awe to remember what he actually said.

Up in the stands, however, as Mickey Mantle sauntered past, Uncle Carson cupped his massive hands to his mouth and hollered, "Hey, Mantle! You're a stinking bum! You couldn't hit the side of a barn if they pitched underhand to you!"

For the record, I'm not sure this is precisely what Uncle Carson yelled at Mickey Mantle, either. But it's certainly within the ballpark, as they say, because Uncle Carson was a world-class heckler, a one-man leather lung, the ultimate obnoxious Oriole. Mickey Mantle just laughed and kept walking.

When I got back to our seats, Uncle C was buying a couple of cold beers.

"How old are you now?" He asked as the vendor moved along. He was holding two large cups of beer.

"Eleven," I answered truthfully.

"That's old enough." He handed me a National Bohemian beer, my first ballpark beer. A moment later, facing the field of play, he calmly remarked, "Just so you know, Squire, some things need to stay at the ballpark.'"

I knew exactly what he meant.

Funny thing about life on a beautiful blue marble.

I failed to become the next Arnold Palmer. But at least I grew up to collaborate on his memoirs, becoming a good friend of the game's most charismatic figure.

Some years ago, I even had the chance to tell Brooks Robinson about Uncle Carson at a dinner where I was the guest of honor for my sports journalism and books. The event's hosts had secretly invited the

greatest third baseman of all time to sit beside the honoree, who was nearly as tongue-tied and in awe as he was in 1964.

"I think I remember your Uncle Carson," Robinson told me with a laugh. "Or at least a few hundred others like him — especially up in Yankee Stadium. They made your uncle look like a minor league heckler, I'm afraid."

We had a fine time chatting about the Oriole's golden seasons and lamented their cellar-dwelling ways these days. In 1966, Robinson was voted the All-Star Game Most Valuable Player and finished second to teammate Frank Robinson in the American League Most Valuable Player Award voting, and the Orioles went on to win their first World Series against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

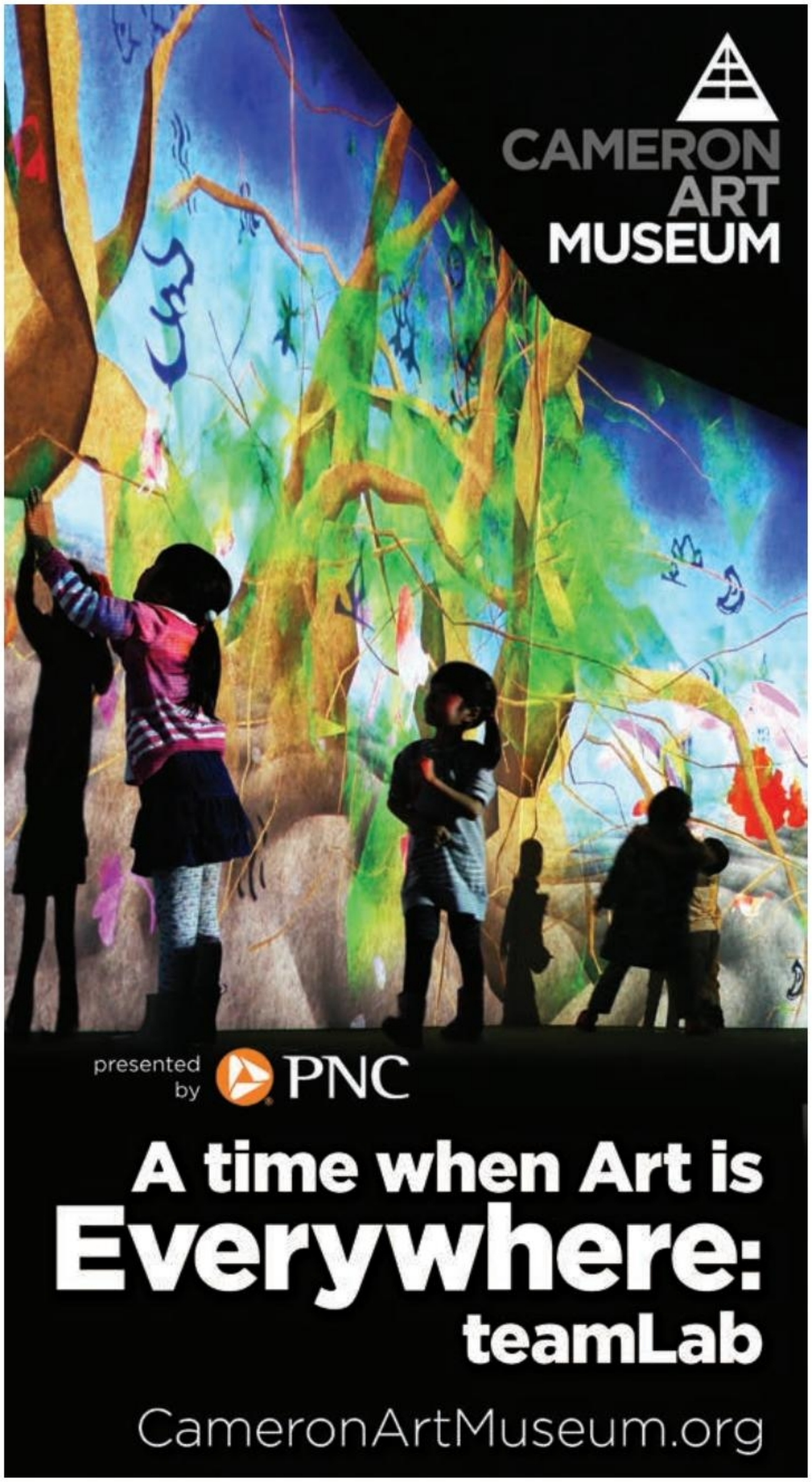
In the 1970 post-season, Robinson hit for an average of .583 in the American League Championship and tagged the Cincinnati Reds for a pair of homers on their way to a 4–1 shellacking and their second World Series title. It was Robinson's defensive prowess that snagged the Series MVP, however, and prompted Reds manager Sparky Anderson to quip, "I'm beginning to see Brooks in my sleep. If I dropped this paper plate, he'd pick it up on one hop and throw me out at first."

At the end of his final season in 1977, having collected 16 Golden Gloves, Robinson's No. 5 jersey was retired. Six years later, he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame on the first ballot. "It all seemed to pass so quickly," Brooks Robinson told me that night we ate supper together. "But what amazing memories."

As another hot summer ends, as overdue rain and cooler nights heal my withered garden and herald the post-seasons of golf and baseball, my friend Arnold Palmer is gone and this month the Birds — per usual — are dwelling deep in the American League cellar, their glory years just a pleasant memory.

Having lost all my marbles but having found a blue one buried in the earth of my own garden, I'm probably where I should be at this moment and time on this fragile blue planet, lucky to have a quieter world I can hold in the palm of my hand.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.



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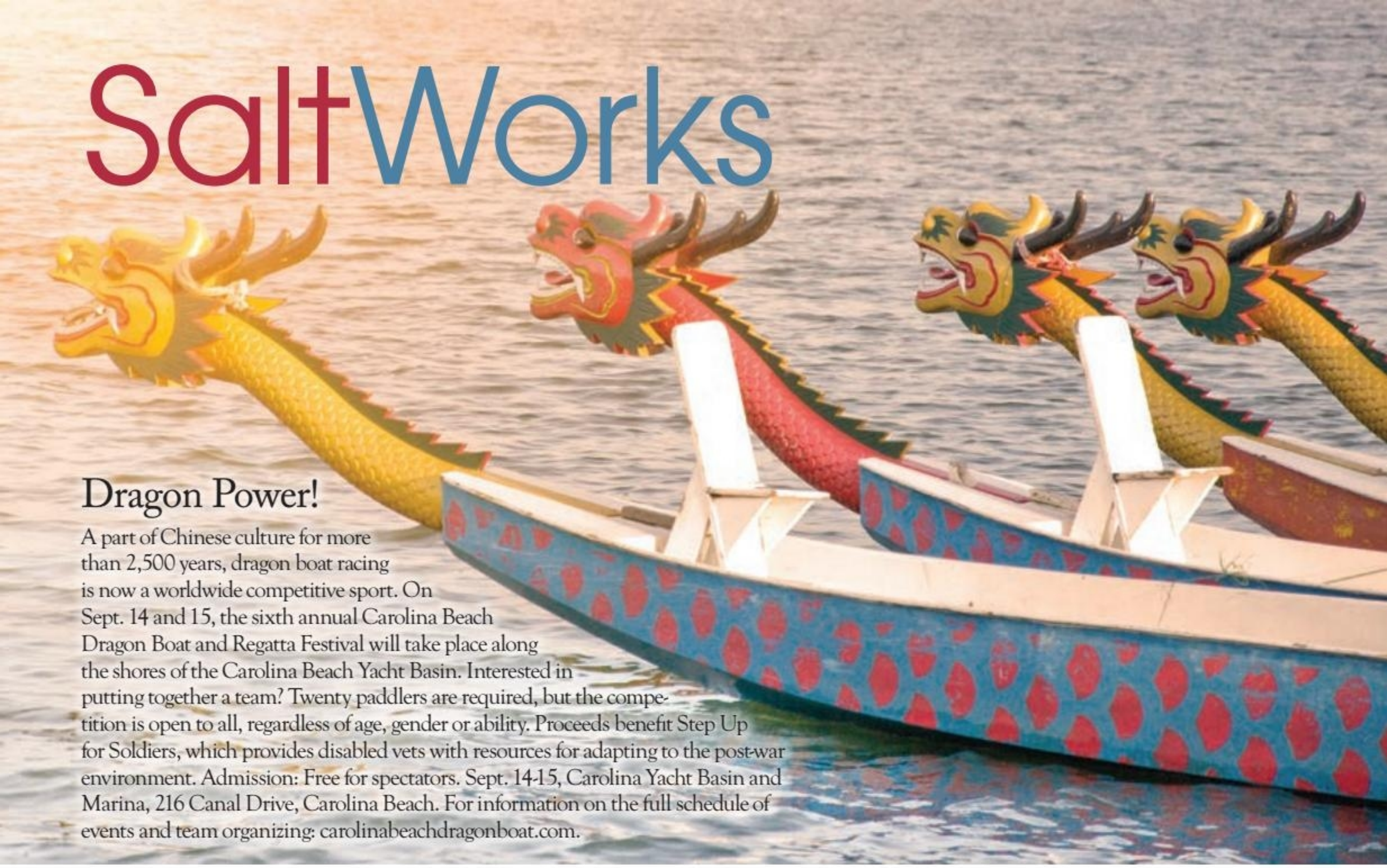

Dragon Power!

A part of Chinese culture for more than 2,500 years, dragon boat racing is now a worldwide competitive sport. On Sept. 14 and 15, the sixth annual Carolina Beach Dragon Boat and Regatta Festival will take place along the shores of the Carolina Beach Yacht Basin. Interested in putting together a team? Twenty paddlers are required, but the competition is open to all, regardless of age, gender or ability. Proceeds benefit Step Up for Soldiers, which provides disabled vets with resources for adapting to the post-war environment. Admission: Free for spectators. Sept. 14-15, Carolina Yacht Basin and Marina, 216 Canal Drive, Carolina Beach. For information on the full schedule of events and team organizing: carolinabeachdragonboat.com.

She Sells Seashells

Founded in 1957, the North Carolina Shell Club hosts a juried exhibition each year and welcomes new members of all levels of expertise. This year, the organization's 43rd annual North Carolina Shell Show will take place Sept. 28-30 at the Coastline Conference Center, bringing together shell collectors, dealers, naturalists and general fans of all things malacological.

A competition is held in several categories, with special groups for novices and juniors. Come vote for your favorite exhibits. Tickets: $3-$4. Sept. 28-30. Coastline Conference and Events Center, 503 Nutt St., Wilmington. For more information: (336) 692-4492 or ncshellclub.com.

True Blue

Join your progressive friends for "Politics and Prose," a fundraiser featuring North Carolina writers Clyde Edgerton, Celia Rivenbark, Kelly Rae Williams and Wiley Cash to benefit TurnNC Blue, a group dedicated to the election of progressive Democratic candidates in Raleigh and Washington, DC. Each author will share a piece inspired by contemporary issues. Sept. 19, 7 p.m.: VIP reception 6-7 p.m. Theater Now, 19 S. 10th St., Wilmington. For more information and to purchase tickets: turnncblue.org.

Southport Wooden Boat Show

The Old Yacht Basin is the setting for the ninth annual Southport Wooden Boat Show, which features many examples of the shipbuilder's art, both in and out of water. There will also be a wooden boat-building demonstration by Mark Bayne, whose Cape Fear Community College students will build a wooden boat "from scratch" over the course of the day. Maritime displays from local groups, including the Fort Fisher Underwater Archaeology Lab and the Cape Fear Museum of History and Science, boat rides and a variety of children's activities presented by the N.C. Maritime Museum in Southport round out the day. Admission: Free. Sept. 29, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. West Moore Street and South Caswell Avenue, Southport. Info: (910) 477-2787 or southportwoodenboatshow.com.

It Takes a Village

The Brunswick County Intercultural Festival celebrates diversity in all its aspects, and this year's celebration is bigger than ever, packed with performing artists, children's activities, a vendor's village, cultural displays and ethnic food trucks. The International Village features cultural information and resources from Africa, South America, Asia and Europe. Entertainment offerings include artists in authentic traditional costumes. Along them: the Lower Cape Fear Filipino-American Dancers, the Japanese Drummers, and Alma Y Corazon, Mexico. Admission: Free. Sept. 29, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Odell Williamson Auditorium grounds at Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road, Bolivia. For info: (910) 842-6566 or bcifestival.org.

High Strung

Christina Brier and Kathryn Sloat — the harp duo known at Lilac 94 — met as students at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and are now dedicated to performing new and previously undiscovered music for the harp. As the opening night of their Masterworks series, the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra welcomes Lilac 94 for "High Strung," a program which includes the Welsh-tinged *Over the Stone* harp concerto by Karl Jenkins and Rachmaninoff's *Symphony No. 2*. Sept. 22, 7:30 p.m. Wilson Center, 703 N. 3rd St., Wilmington. For tickets and information: (910) 362-7999 or wilmingtonsymphony.org.

Low Country Fun

The North Carolina Coastal Federation works to protect and restore coastal water quality and ecosystems on our coast. On Sept. 30, the group will host its annual Low Country Boil, which in addition to some fine local shrimp will feature live music, yard games and a coastal-themed silent auction. Live music from Into the Fog. Tickets: $50 for members; $60 non-members. Sept. 30, 5-8 p.m. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach. For info: (910) 509-2838 or nccoast.org.

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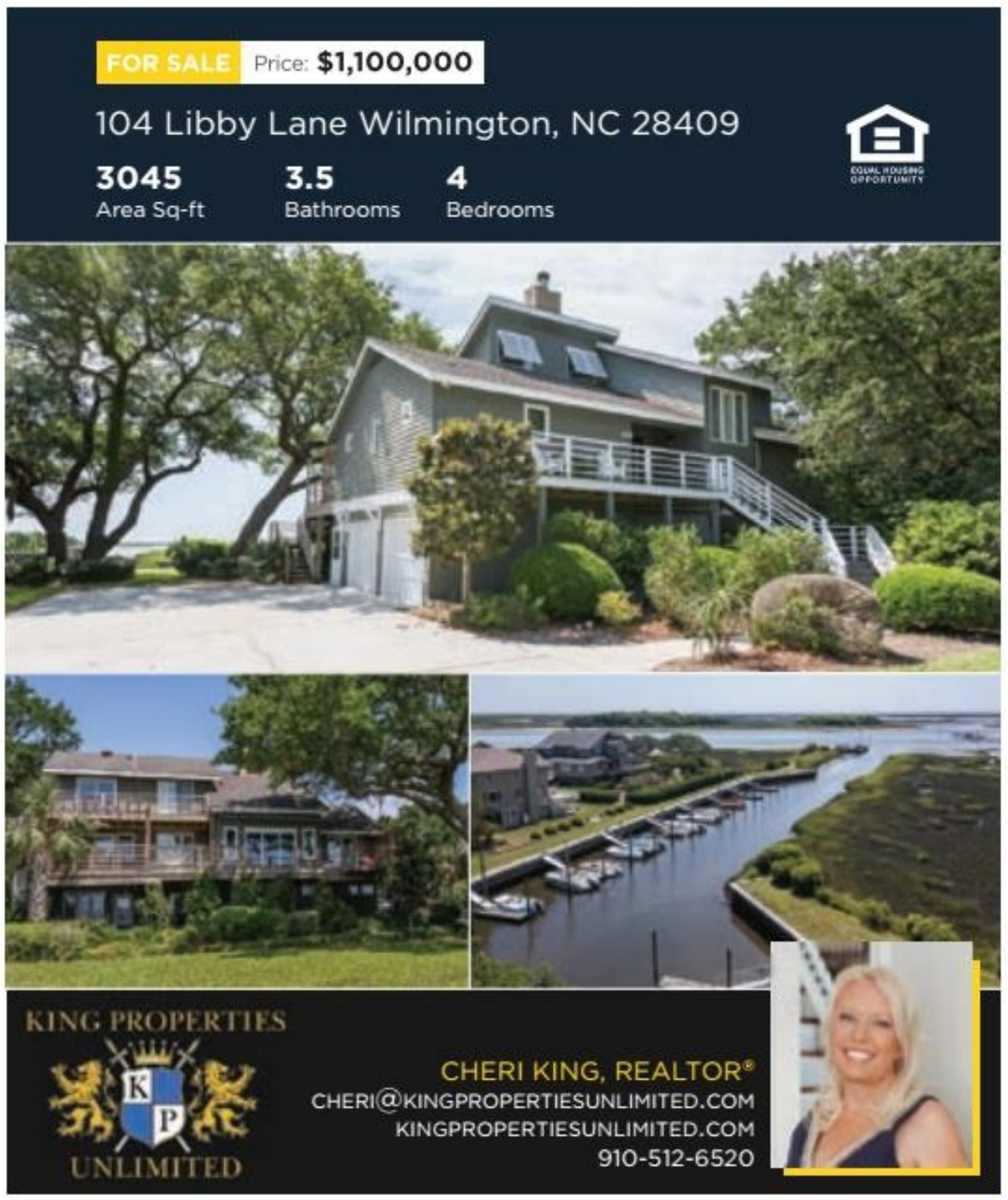
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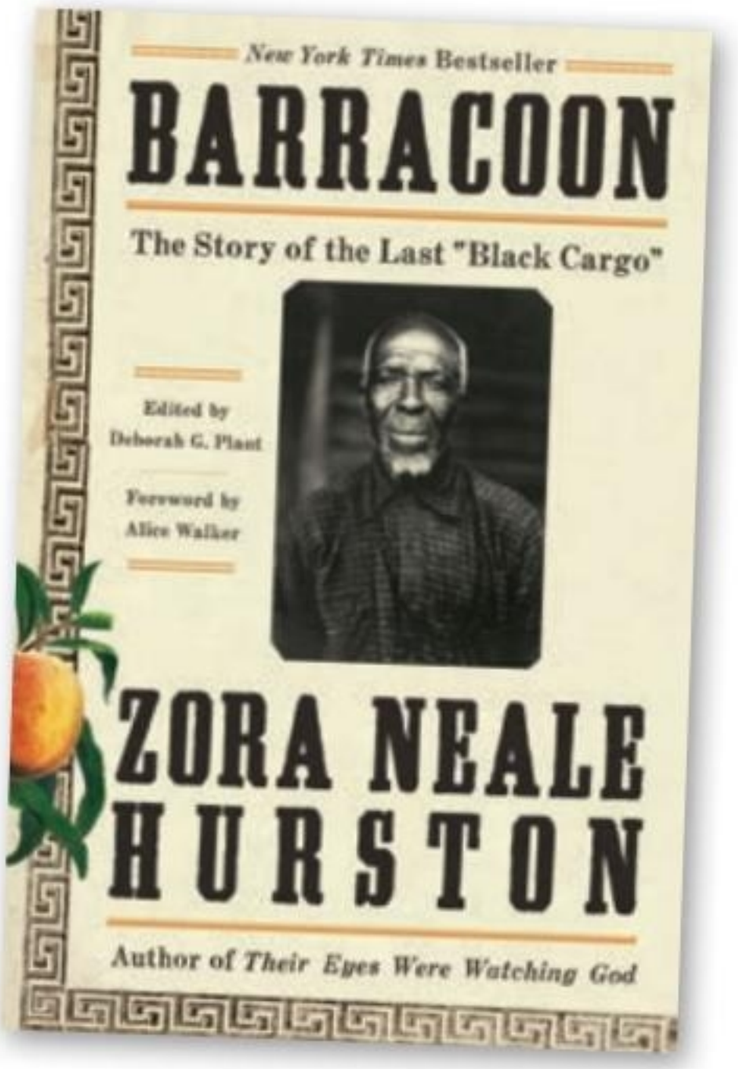
Dark Passage

An oral history recounts the grim realities of slavery



By Stephen E. Smith

Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo" is an oral history as told by Cudjo Lewis, a 95-year-old former slave who was among the last Africans transported to the United States prior to the Civil War. (A barracoon is an enclosure, fortress or compound in which black captives were held before being sold to slavers.)

Lewis' narrative is pieced together from interviews conducted in 1927 by Zora Neale Hurston, an anthropologist and popular writer of the Harlem Renaissance who had, prior to the publication of *Barracoon*, faded into obscurity. After completing her three months of interviews with Lewis, Hurston was unable to find a publisher for her manuscript and Lewis' story languished for 90 years until it was released by Amistad, a HarperCollins imprint, and immediately climbed *The New York Times* best-seller list.

Slave narratives aren't a rarity. *The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, The African Preacher, The Life of Olaudah Equiano, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl*, etc., have enjoyed popular acceptance, so much so that they assume a similar narrative pattern, beginning with a statement of birth, usually taking place on a plantation, and concluding with reflections upon the slave experience from the point of view of a freeman. *Barracoon* differs from the typical slave narrative: It's the *complete* recounting of the slave experience, beginning with the principal's early life in Africa, the massacre of his family, his time in a barracoon, the Middle Passage, during which he was packed with more than 100 other human beings aboard the ship Clotilde, and his suffering as a freed slave who found himself without family in a strange, hostile land where his existence was marked by brutality and endemic bigotry. Nothing about Lewis' story is uplifting. Degradations, heaped one upon another, marked his passage through a life that was a desperate struggle for survival marked by physical and emotional suffering.

So why publish such a book? Isn't there grief enough in the world? And why read about suffering that's past and done?

The casual student of history understands that slavery was the dominant disruptive force in our nation's history, and that issues of caste and class continue to profoundly disturb the workings of our democracy. If slavery is the legal expression of the relative status of one race to another, it's possible to prohibit by law the mechanisms that enable the attendant injustices. It's much more difficult to banish the persistent stigma of slavery from the hearts and minds of our citizens. Hurston had a responsibility to relate the undeniable horrors of Lewis' life so that readers could truly comprehend

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the circumstances under which he lived. Writers and/or folklorists take no pleasure in making readers miserable, but sentimentality is deadly stuff, and it's reprehensible to hide the grim realities of life with self-serving lies. Just as we must confront the horrors of the Holocaust, it's well that we have access to the unvarnished truth about slavery. We need to face the past as it was in order to comprehend the pernicious legacy that shapes the present. Cudjo Lewis no doubt understood this when he said, "Thankee Jesus! Somebody come ast about Cudjo."

To comprehend Lewis' experience, it's necessary to understand his dialect; therefore, Hurston's facility at producing a text that conveys the orality of her informant's spoken words is of the utmost importance. Initially Lewis' dialect can be slow going for readers who have difficulty comprehending the peculiarities of his vernacular, which is unlike the more contrived dialect of Mark Twain's Jim or Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus. "Yeah, in Afficky we always know dere was a God; he name Alahua, but po' Affickans we cain readee de Bible, so we doan know God got a Son. We ain' ignant — we jest doan know. Nobody doan tell us 'bout Adam eatee de apple, we didn't know de seven seals was sealee 'gainst us." After reading a few pages of dialect, the reader slips easily into the rhythm of the language and Lewis is easily understood.

Hurston worked hard at producing a readable but authentic facsimile of Lewis' speech, but it was this use of dialect that publishers, intent on translating the text into Standard English, offered as a justification for rejecting publication of the manuscript.

The subplot of *Barracoon* concerns Hurston's determination to gently coax from Lewis his life experience. A few critics have dismissed the book as Hurston's recreation of Lewis' story, but it's clear to the reader — indeed it is necessary for the reader to believe — that Hurston resisted interjecting her own point of view into Lewis' telling. She's patient with Lewis and sensitive to his emotional reaction to the terrors of his life, enticing him with peaches and gently prodding him into revealing the most intimate and horrifying details.

The attack on Lewis' African village, the death of his loved ones, the Middle Passage, and his years as a slave are all necessary elements of the story, but Lewis' primary focus is on his life in Africatown, the community in which he lived after emancipation. He lost children in unexplained accidents, was swindled by white lawyers, and eventually suffered the death of his wife. And like all African-Americans of the time, he endured the humiliations of Jim Crow. What resonates with the reader is Lewis' homesickness, his love and longing for his African childhood, and his humanity. When Hurston asked him to pose for a photograph, Lewis donned his best suit of clothes — but stood before the camera in bare feet. "I want to look lak I in Affica, 'cause dat where I want to be," he said. After living most of his life in America, he still pined for his homeland.

At a time when compassion is in short supply, Cudjo Lewis' story is a reminder that all that's good and human in our hearts needs renewing.

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.

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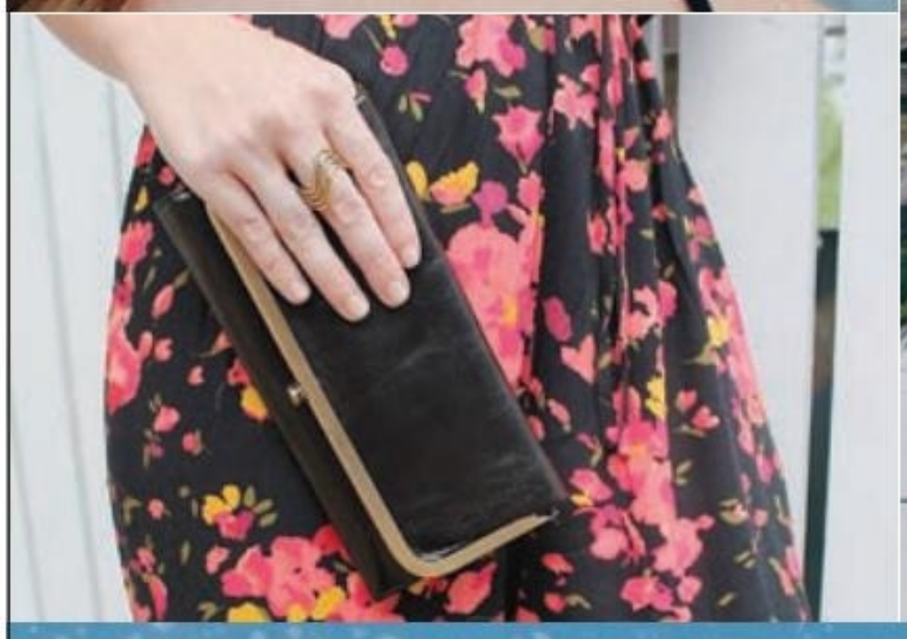

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To Your Good Health

A new YMCA can mean a fresh beginning for everyone

By Dana Sachs

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

Aileen Sutton

Job: Healthy Living Director at the Express Y of the YMCA of Southeastern North Carolina

First moved to Wilmington: Six years ago

Favorite spots:

1. Lowe's*
2. Home Depot*

*She and her husband are building a house all by themselves.

What does that title mean, "Healthy Living Director"?

I'm responsible for coordinating our health and wellness programs both within the YMCA's four walls as well as out in the community. It's really just trying to connect all of the things we do here as a gym to create health and wellness opportunities for all. So, trying to engage partners in the community — like the senior center — to expand what we do beyond just a gym.

I was about to ask how you differentiate the Y from a gym.

Of course we do gymlike things. Classes, and personal training and cardio equipment. But in all of our efforts we're really intentional about creating an atmosphere that celebrates our three tenets: healthy living, social responsibility, and youth development.

So you're opening your new facility, the Nir Family Y, very soon. Can you tell me what we can expect?

Yes, we're shooting (to open at) the end of this year or early 2019. Everything's going to be bigger and better than what we have now. Really awesome big spaces for our child care program. Two racquetball courts, which Wilmington needs. Five locker rooms — women's and men's, boys' and girls' youth locker rooms — so you're not having to contend for space with a bunch of 10-year-olds on the swim team — and then a big family locker room space with individual stalls, so a dad can go in with his daughter and get changed and shower up and go to the pool. And we'll have a dedicated youth wing. A teaching kitchen. And the upstairs will be all the health and wellness space. Our studio spaces are larger. More cardio equipment. And a dedicated small-group personal training space with all the bells and whistles.

Which part do you get most excited about?

My brain is geared toward programming. (For example), the teaching kitchen. Let's do basic cooking classes for teens, who need to learn how to cook rice. Because it's a life skill.

As a member of the Y, I love seeing the range of physical abilities here, from people who could compete in Ironman competitions to people in wheelchairs, and everyone's pushing to their own limits.

It's really cool. One of our wellness coaches is a big champion of our

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Physability Program, which (is geared toward) members who need additional assistance during their workouts, (like with) getting in and out of a machine. And he's gone full-in for research on an adaptive rowing program. At the new Y, our cycle studio is going to become a cycle rowing studio. We'll be able to do adaptive rowing.

Why is adaptive rowing so helpful to people with limited physical abilities?

You think about the exercise options for somebody in a wheelchair. We have hand bikes. There might be a seated elliptical. So, (a rowing machine would give) an individual a completely different muscle set to use. It (requires) a lot more core engagement. And the group class atmosphere has an added benefit. If I can have a fleet of eight rowers of all abilities engage in that class, that's going to be really cool.

You'd have people in wheelchairs taking a class with people who aren't in wheelchairs.

Yeah. And we already do that in the cycle studio.

I notice the Y runs a lot of "Challenge" programs to motivate people.

Some people are really internally motivated. Kudos to the folks who can get up at 6 a.m. and make it here five days a week. But there's a whole bulk of the population (who) need that extra incentive. Is it, "I'm going to walk a mile a day for the next 30 days and earn a T-shirt"? That can be a great incentive.

What do you say to people when they're discouraged?

I say, "Getting here is 90 percent of the battle." The fact that they're standing here talking to me about how they're discouraged, they're already 90 percent of the way there.

And what discourages people?

When we meet folks and give tours, we try to get people to answer the question, "What are you looking for in a facility like the Y?" And it's interesting. When people do leave, they say things like, "Well, I don't have the time." You just asked me about the pep talk. Well, it's "Let's make a plan. Let's make smart goals. You know you're

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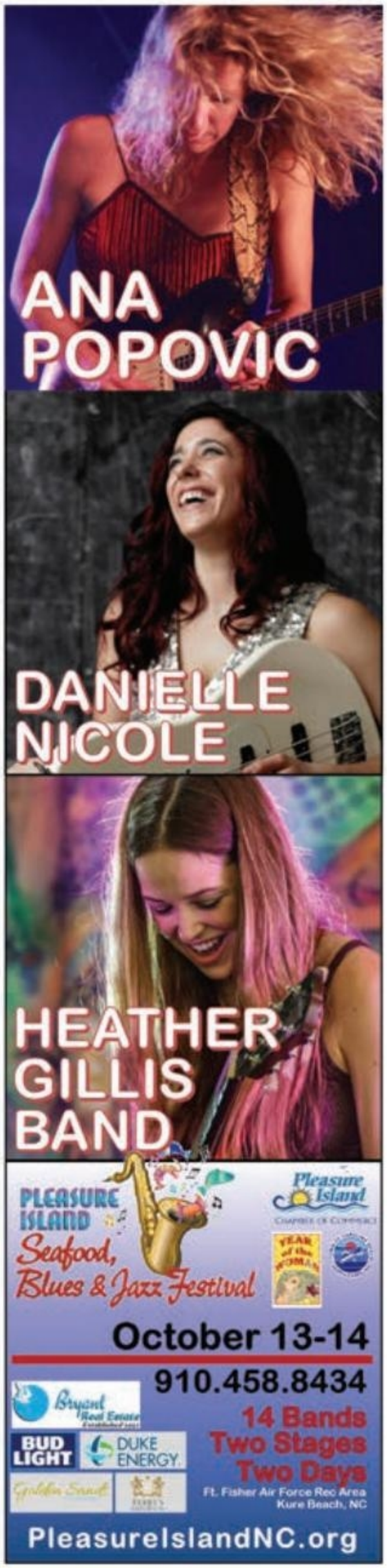
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not going to become a strong man in two days, so let's scale it back and maybe just plan to make these two classes this week." So we really try to help folks with setting smart goals and then just making the commitment to be here.

Sometimes, too, people can feel intimidated by the prospect of exercising.

Yeah. Nervous. Like, "I don't know how to use that piece of equipment." Or, "I don't want to go to a class and be the only person that hasn't exercised in five years." If I can get someone here, they'll realize that this is a really safe space to — initially — not know what you're doing. You're not the only one. So come on in. We'll show you.

What kind of exercise do you like?

Small group training. And I do a lot of yoga. I love swimming, and playing any kind of sports. Lifting heavy things. I find that enjoyable.

What kind of exercise do you dislike?

I'm not really a fan of running. I run when chased. Or when there's a ball involved.

Can you describe some people who made that transition to feeling comfortable at the Y?

We had some staff join our Team Weight Loss Challenge, a 10-week challenge with small groups, weekly weigh-ins, prizes. It was cool to see staff who might be here three days a week working but had never touched the wellness floor, and they were out there getting it done, going to classes, trying new things.

I'm going to give you a superpower to change just one thing and, as a result, you will make people healthier. What's your superpower?

The superpower of "follow through." If someone made the decision to put a class on their calendar, I'm going to be the one to transport them there at that moment. And (they'll be) automatically clothed in the proper attire. With a water bottle. And hydrated.

Dana Sachs's latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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Book Tour Blues

At Bespoke Coffee and Dry Goods

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MALLORY CASH

By Wiley Cash

Bespoke Coffee and Dry Goods at the corner of Princess and 2nd streets in downtown Wilmington seemed like a good place to meet my friends and fellow writers Jason Mott and Taylor Brown for several reasons. First, the place is absolutely gorgeous. Huge windows pour light into a high-ceilinged space that is grounded by checkered tile, hardwood floors and countless succulent plants that lend soft pops of natural color to the industrial furnishings. Second, Bespoke's coffee is just as outstanding as the curated list of local beers they have on tap. Finally, I knew Taylor would already be there, just as he is every afternoon.

I find Taylor at his spot near the register, sitting at the window that looks out on 2nd. When I say "his spot" I really mean it; a small gold plaque on the counter reads *This space is reserved for Taylor "The Bodyguard" Brown.*

"I spend hours writing here every afternoon," he says when I

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ask him to tell me the story of the plaque.

"When they first opened, I would stay until closing at 7:00 p.m., and then I would walk out with the staff." He smiles, looks down at his open laptop where it sits just below the plaque. "They started calling me the bodyguard."

I have known Taylor since an advanced reader's copy of his debut novel, *Fallen Land*,

found its way to me in the months leading up to its publication. The novel, which was released in 2016, was a huge success, and it was followed by the novels *The River of Kings* in 2017 and *Gods of Howl Mountain* in 2018. He has just recently returned from a long book tour that had him crisscrossing the country.

"How are you feeling after all that travel?" I ask.

"It gave me mono," he says.

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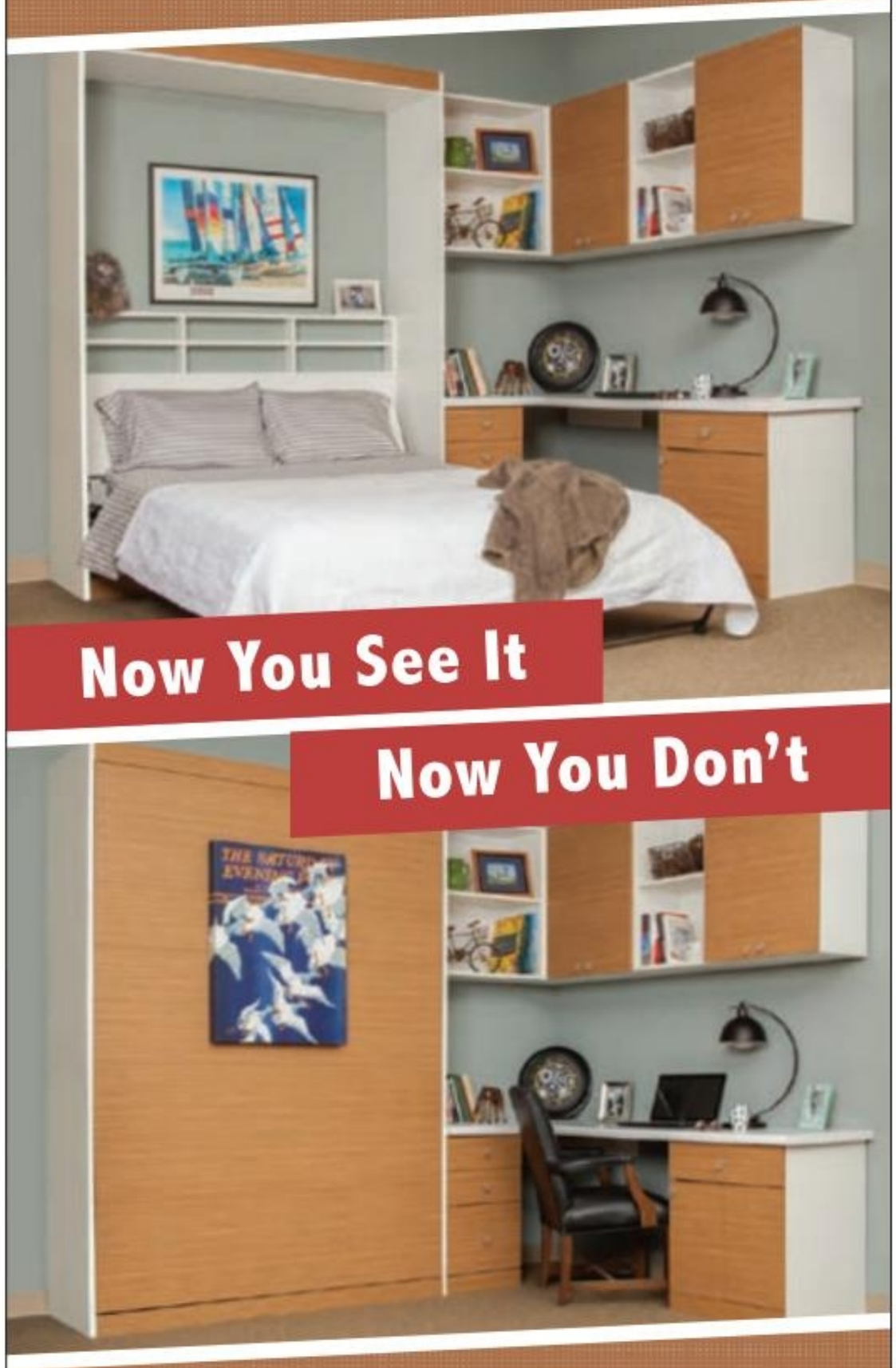

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I laugh.

"No, seriously," he says. "I went to the doctor last week."

Jason walks in the door while we are talking. Like Taylor, he has just arrived home from a long book tour himself. We all shake hands, and Jason asks how we are doing.

"Book tour gave Taylor mono," I say.

"I almost died on book tour, too," Jason says.

I gesture toward the bar.

"Let's get some drinks."

We get our drinks — iced coffee for Taylor, water for Jason, and an IPA from Wilmington Brewing Company for me — and grab a table just inside the front door.

I have known Jason since my parents introduced me to him in 2013, when his first novel, *The Returned*, was released. The book was optioned and produced as a television show for ABC before it was even published, and my mom watched it and loved it, and then she and my dad went to one of Jason's book signings. She fell for him because of his books, and my dad fell for him because of his cars. To say that Jason Mott is a car enthusiast is an understatement. He buys them, repairs them, modifies them, and races them. My dad had spent much of his young life doing the same. Finally, a writer both my mother and father could support.

Jason's second novel, *The Wonder of All Things*, was released in 2014, and his novel *The Crossing* was released this spring. I ask him to expound upon his near-death experience on book tour.

"Hospitality driver," he says. "He almost mowed down someone crossing the street in Seattle. He slammed on the brakes, and I thought I was going through the windshield. He told me he hadn't seen the guy because he'd been about to pass out."

"What did you do?" Taylor asks.

"Well, I was starving, and I figured if he was about to pass out, then he might need food. We stopped at Burger King and ate dinner before heading to the bookstore."

"The glamour of book tour," I say.

ARTS & CULTURE

Our conversation quickly turns to surprising, horrifying and hilarious things that can happen when you are on book tour alone, staying in bad hotels, catching red-eye flights, and always feeling like you are supposed to be somewhere else.

"I'm actually working on a novel right now about a writer who goes on a book tour where insane things happen," Jason says. "I wrote it as a screenplay, and the folks out in Hollywood said it may get more interest if it's a book first."

"I'll read it," I said.

"I'll read it and blurb it," Taylor said.

We tell more stories, finish our drinks, and then stand to leave. As someone who drives a toy-littered Subaru Outback with two car seats in the back, I watch Jason leave and try to imagine what kind of car he will be climbing into. Taylor heads back to his seat where his laptop still rests below his plaque.

"How late will you stay?" I ask.

"They close at 6:00 p.m. now," Taylor says. "They felt bad for running me out of here an hour early, so they gave me a key to lock up."

"Are you serious?" I ask.

He smiles and holds up a brass key on his key ring.

I say good-bye and step out into the heat. As I settle into my car and turn on the A/C, I imagine Taylor a few hours from now, closing down his laptop, turning off the lights at Bespoke Coffee and Dry Goods and locking the door behind him, glad to be home.

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His latest novel, The Last Ballad, *is available wherever books are sold.*

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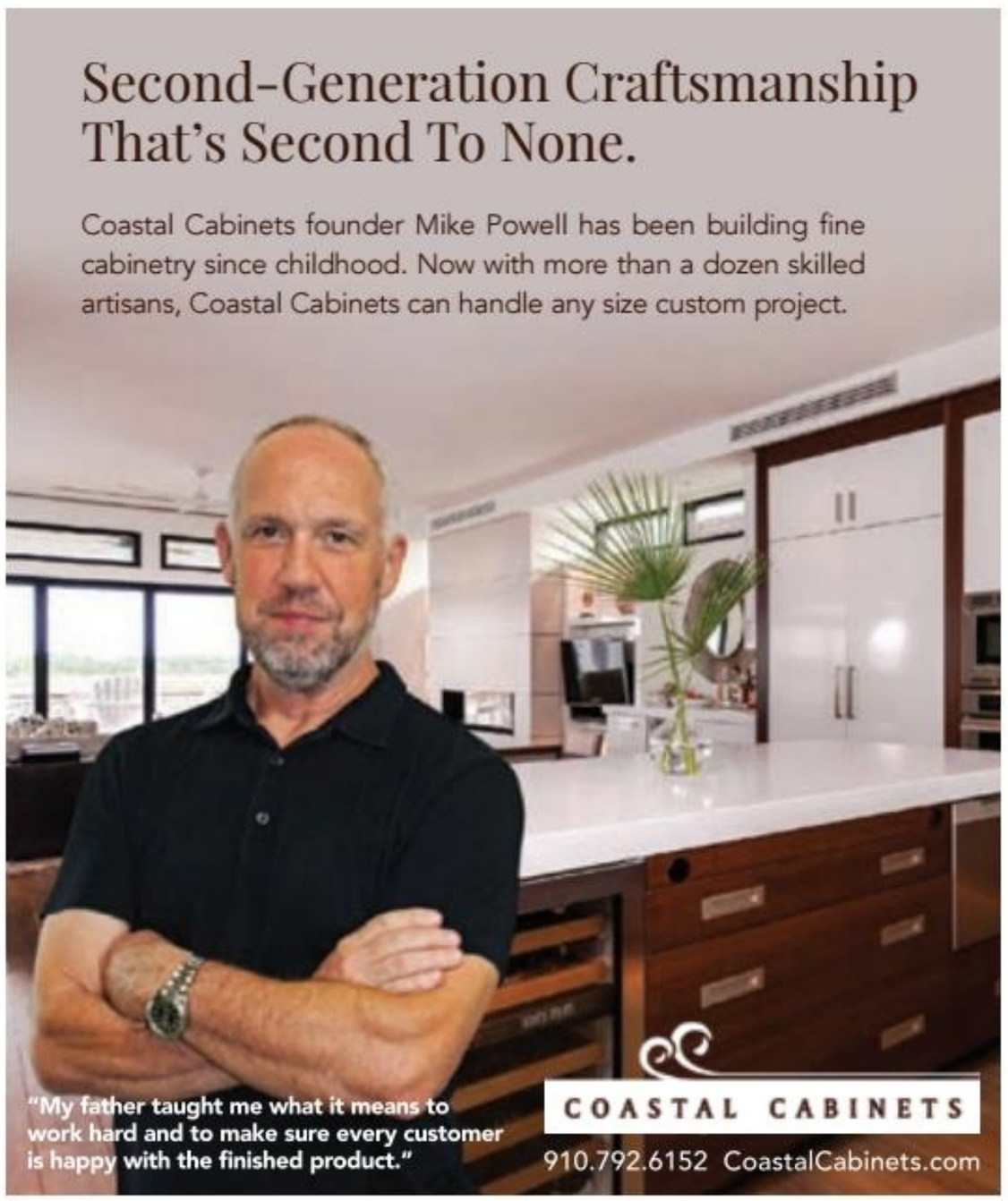

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Here Today, Gone Tomato

Nothing says Southern cooking more than a plate of fried green tomatoes

By Jane Lear

The tomato is a tropical berry — it originated in South America — and so it requires plenty of long, hot sunny days to reach its best: the deep, rich-tasting, almost meaty sweetness many of us live for each summer. When September rolls around, though, it's a different story. It's not that I've gotten bored with all that lush ripeness, but I develop a very definite craving for fried green tomatoes.

If you grow your own backyard beefsteaks, unripe tomatoes are available pretty much all summer long, but this is the time of year they start getting really good. In the early autumn, the days are undeniably getting shorter, and thus there are fewer hours of sun. That and cooler temperatures result in green tomatoes with a greater ratio of acid to sugars.

And my cast-iron skillet, which tends to live on top of the stove anyway, gets a workout. Fried green tomatoes, after all, are terrific any time of day. In the morning, they are wonderful sprinkled with a little brown sugar while still hot in the skillet, right before you gently lift them onto warmed breakfast plates. If you're a brunch person, serve them that way, and you'll bring down the house. At lunchtime, embellishing BLTs with fried green tomatoes may seem like a time-consuming complication, but those sandwiches will be transcendent, and you and yours are worth it.

When it comes to the evening meal, fried green tomatoes are typically considered a side dish, and there is nothing wrong with that. But in my experience, they always steal the show, so I tend to build supper around them. I rely on leftover cold roasted chicken or ham to fill in the cracks, for instance. Or I make them the center of a vegetable-based supper in which no one will miss the meat. They play well with corn on the cob or succotash, snap beans or butter beans, ratatouille, grilled zucchini and summer squash with pesto, or grits, rice, or potatoes. Pickled black-eyed peas (aka Texas caviar) are nice in the mix, as are sliced ripe red tomatoes, which, when served alongside crunchy golden fried green tomatoes, add a great contrast in texture and flavor.

If you are fortunate enough to have a jar of watermelon rind pickles in the pantry, my Aunt Roxy would suggest that you hop up and get it. I ate many a meal in her cottage on Harbor Island, and early on I learned watermelon and tomatoes have a curious yet genuine affinity for one another. I imagine Aunt Roxy would greet today's popular fresh tomato and watermelon salads with a satisfied nod of recognition.

We always had a difference of opinion, however, over cream gravy, a popular accompaniment for fried green tomatoes. It's not that I am morally opposed to lily gilding, but I have never seen the point in putting something wet on something you have worked to make crisp and golden. A butter sauce on pan-fried soft-shelled crabs, chili or melted cheese on french fries, a big scoop of vanilla on a flaky double-crusted fruit pie: I don't care what it is, the result is soggy food, and I don't like it.

When it comes to the actual coating for fried green tomatoes, the most traditional choice is dried bread crumbs. I sometimes use the crisp, flaky Japanese bread crumbs called panko, but like Fannie Flagg, I am happiest with cornmeal. It can be white or yellow, fine-ground or coarse. It doesn't matter as long as it is sweet-smelling — a sign of freshness. And if you happen to have some okra handy, you may as well fry that up at the same time. Trim the pods, cut them into bite-size nuggets, and coat them like the tomato slices. Although rule one when frying anything is not to crowd the pan (otherwise, the food will steam, not fry), there is always room to work a few pieces of okra into each batch of tomatoes. And whoever you are feeding will think you hung the moon and stars.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Fried Green Tomatoes (Serves 4)

When cutting tomatoes for frying, aim for slices between 1/4 and 1/2 inch thick. If too thin, you won't get the custardy interior you want. And if the slices are too thick, then the coating will burn before the interior is softened.

About 1 cup of cornmeal

Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

1 large egg, lightly beaten with a fork

4 extremely firm (but not rock-hard) large green tomatoes

Vegetable oil or bacon drippings (you can also use a combination of the two)

Preheat the oven to low. Season the cornmeal with salt and pepper and spread in a shallow bowl. Have ready the beaten egg in another shallow bowl. Cut the tomatoes into 1/2-inch slices (see above note).

Pour enough oil or drippings into a large heavy skillet to measure about 1/8 inch and heat over moderate heat until shimmering. Meanwhile, working in batches, dip one tomato slice at a time into the egg, turning to coat, then dredge it well in the cornmeal. As you coat each slice, put it on a sheet of waxed paper and let it rest for a minute or two. (This is something I remember watching Aunt Roxy do. It must give the cornmeal a chance to absorb some moisture and decide to adhere.) By the time you coat enough slices to fit in the skillet, the fat in the pan should be good and hot.

Carefully, so as not to dislodge the coating, slip a batch of tomato slices into the hot fat (do not crowd pan) and fry, turning as necessary, until golden on both sides. Drain the slices on paper towels and transfer them to a baking sheet; tuck them in the oven to stay warm and crisp.

Coat and fry the remaining tomato slices in batches, wiping out the skillet with a paper towel and adding more oil or drippings as needed. Be patient and give the fat time to heat up in between batches. You may find yourself eating the first slice or two while alone in the kitchen, but be sweet and share the rest.

Jane Lear was the senior articles editor at Gourmet *and features director at* Martha Stewart Living.

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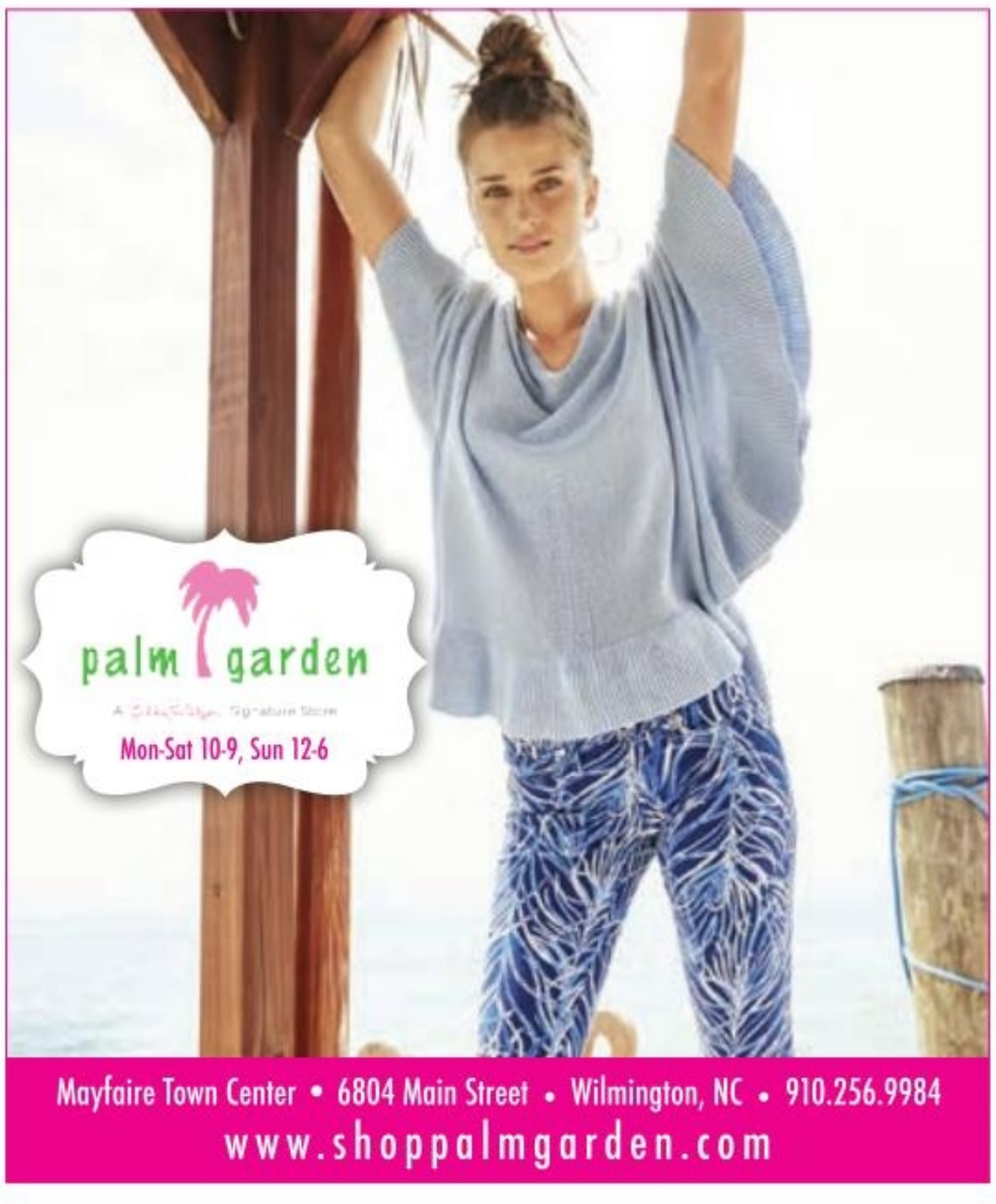

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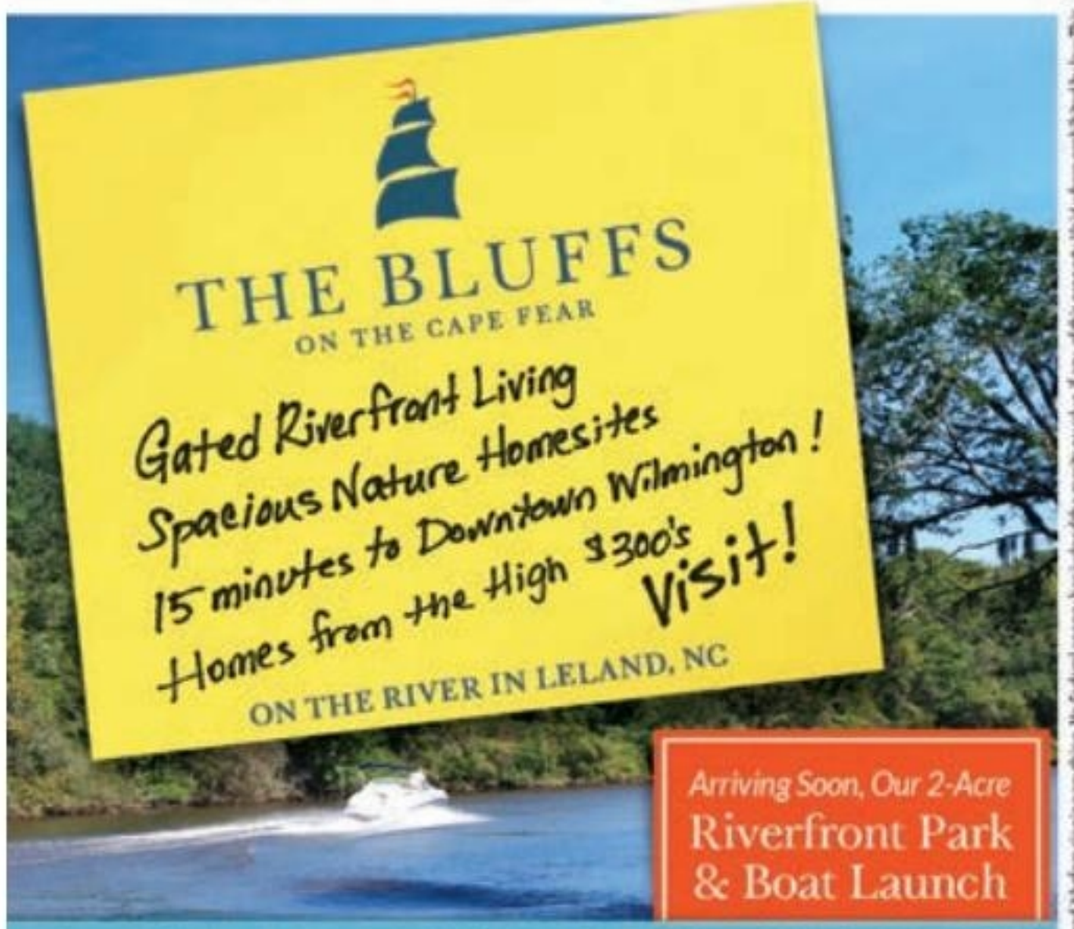

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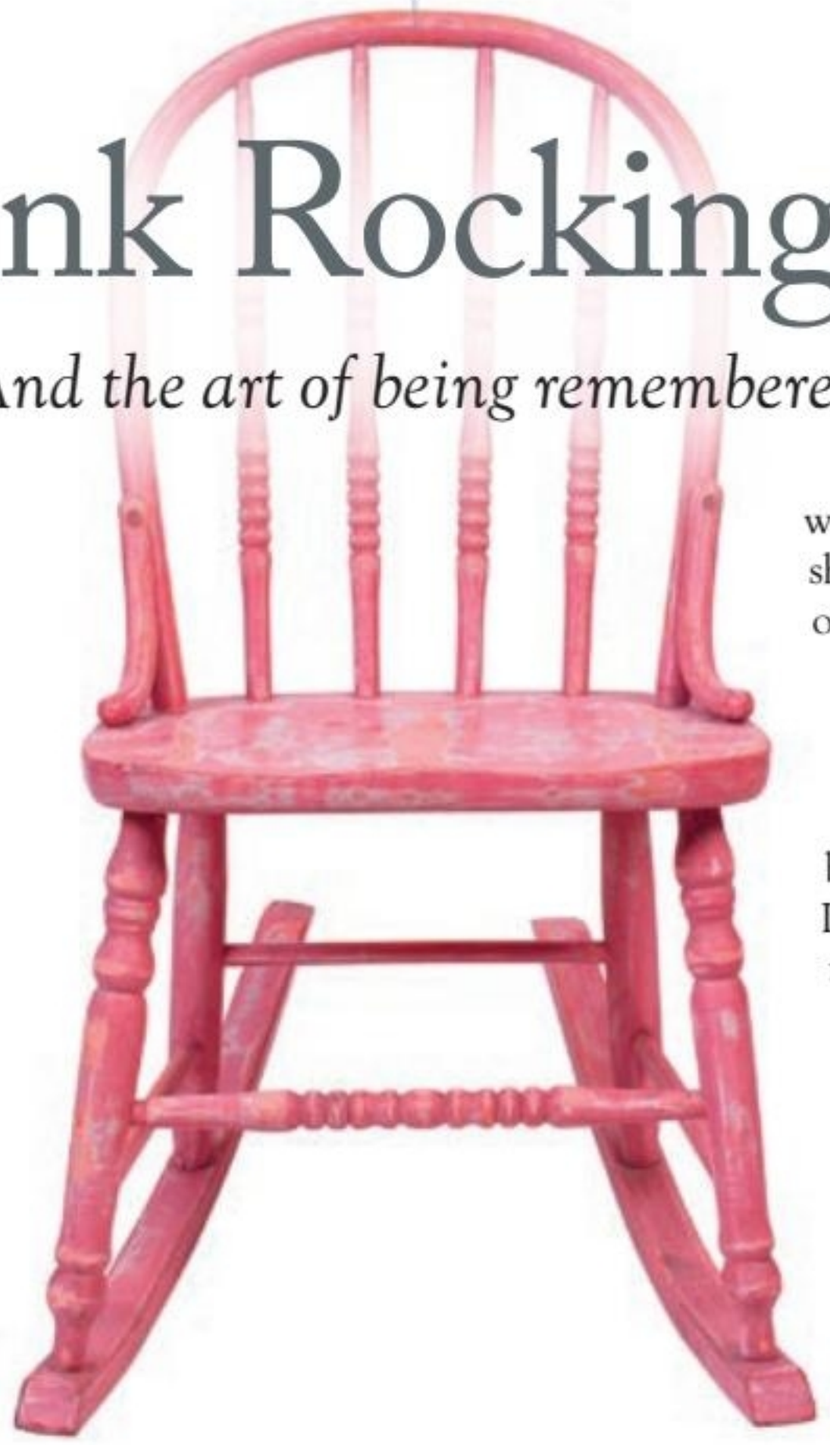

By Bill Thompson

My friend J.B. had wanted me to come by to see him, so I did. It wasn't easy getting to his house. I had to leave the paved road and follow the sandy Onslow County road for about a mile through some cut-over woodland and across a wooden bridge that his father had made back in the 1920s.

He had told me, "Papa built that bridge when he bought his first car. Didn't need a bridge for a mule and wagon to cross that swampy spot. Built it out of solid oak boards he cut right here on the farm." Those same boards were still there, give or take a board or two, for me to cross that day.

When I crossed the bridge, I could see J.B. out in the front yard of his little house. It was the house he had been born in almost 90 years ago. When he was 15 years old, he had left it and his family there near Hubert to follow the horse-show circuit as a groom for a wealthy man from Jacksonville. During that time, he had done well for himself financially, saving his money and making good investments. He had come back home upon retirement. I asked him once why, with all his money, he hadn't retired to Florida or some other place other than Hubert. "I saw all I wanted to see of Florida and most everywhere else. I hadn't seen enough of home," he answered.

As I got out of the car and started walking toward the house, I could see that J.B. was painting a rocking chair. He had placed it on two cement blocks right out in the yard and was applying the paint with a small paintbrush. The color of the paint was pink.

I thought it was curious that this man would want a pink rocking chair for that particular house. The sides of the house had turned gray from weather and age. The porch that went across the front of the house was about three feet off the ground, and you could see under it where a couple of dogs were resting. Only one of the windows, the one for the bedroom, had any curtains.

J.B. looked a lot like the house. What hair he had was gray, and he wore a pair of gray corduroy slacks, a faded blue shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and an old pair of lace-up riding boots.

We greeted each other, shook hands, and he invited me to come and sit on the porch with him. I wanted to ask him right then why he was painting that rocking chair pink but was afraid it might embarrass him, and I figured if he wanted me to know he'd tell me later.

He poured himself a glass of water from a jar filled with ice water and asked me if I wanted some. I told him I did. J.B. had told me long ago that he believed in drinking a lot of water. No soft drinks and definitely no alcohol. He said that was one reason he was still healthy at his age.

We talked for a good while about the business he had called to talk about. Then he reminisced for a while, as always when we were together, about the old days when he was traveling as a groom with the wealthy man's horses.

I was getting ready to leave and as we walked toward the car, he asked, "Aren't you going to ask me about the pink rocking chair?"

"Well, I am curious," I said. "But I figured you'd tell me if you wanted me to know."

"I knew you wouldn't ask. You're too polite sometimes. You are one of the few people who ever comes to see me, so I'll tell you. Hardly anybody ever comes up here to talk to me; like I didn't really come back home, like I'm a stranger or something. I figure that when I die folks will come up here and see that pink rocking chair. They will wonder why an old man like me would have a piece of furniture that color. They will speculate and propose all kinds of reasons, none of which will be true. I painted it so they will have something to talk about and remember me when I'm gone even if they wouldn't talk to me when I was living."

J.B. died a few months after my visit. I went to his funeral and, sure enough, the main topic of conversation at the graveside service was the pink rocking chair. I never told anybody his reason for painting the chair.

Bill Thompson is a regular Salt *contributor. His newest novel,* Chasing Jubal, *a coming of age story in the 1950s Blue Ridge, is available where books are sold.*

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Blue Grosbeak

A plump traveler with a rich song

By Susan Campbell

'Tis the season for unusual travelers! Have you spotted an odd, plump songbird with a heavy bill and a blueish wash at your sunflower seeds? It just might be a blue grosbeak. This medium-size songbird can be seen along fence rows and on electric wires in rural areas throughout much of our state during the warmer months. Reappearing after long winter stays in Central America and the Caribbean, blue grosbeaks breed across much of the United States, from central California across throughout the Plains states and up into Virginia. And juveniles, less colorful than their parents, headed southward are even more likely to be overlooked.

Although this bird is found in all of North Carolina during the breeding season, it is often missed by casual observers during migration. The combination of black, brown, white and just a wash of blue of youngsters is confusing for certain. Furthermore, this is a bird of both pine and mixed forest, one often encountered with so many other birds along habitat edges that are associated with agricultural land use. However, the blue grosbeak's large silvery bill is easily recognizable. The sexes are significantly different with immature birds having indistinct plumage similar to their mothers; Males are a dark blue with a small black mask around the bill and eyes as well as chestnut wing bars. Females are a cinnamon hue with rusty wing bars and a bit of blue on the rump and in the tail. Some males in their first spring will not breed. If they do not have the extensive blue of fully mature males, then they will not be able to attract mates in order to start a family. However, this year of singing, fighting and extensive experience foraging will make them very good prospects come their second spring as long as they survive the winter.

The blue grosbeak's song is a rich warble, but its call is a loud, metallic "chip" that carries a long way regardless the season. Hearing these vocalizations is the best way to find them, given their propensity for spending a lot of time in thick undergrowth. Nests are placed low in thick vegetation and viny tangles; the blue grosbeak prefers shrubbery to trees for breeding. The nest is a compact, cup-shaped affair composed of twigs, grasses, leaves and rootlets often with paper, string or other litter mixed in. Blue grosbeaks are one of only a few migrant species that raise not just one, but two broods of between three and five young in a season.

Unfortunately, blue grosbeaks all too often end up, unwittingly, raising the young of parasitic brown-headed cowbirds. Cowbird females lay eggs in the nests of other species found in open or semi-open habitat. The eggs, which are larger, manage to hatch ahead of the hosts.' They produce young that then grow larger and faster, out-competing the nestling grosbeaks.

Like most of our songbirds, this species feeds heavily on insects in the summer months. Caterpillars make up a significant portion of the diet. But blue grosbeaks also will hunt for food at or near ground level, collecting adult grasshoppers and crickets as well as other large insects. Their bills are effective at breaking up prey items as well as large seeds, such as sunflower kernels. Individual blue grosbeaks do show up at feeding stations, but they do not congregate the way other finches do. So keep an eye out if you live on the edge of town or in a more rural location. Spotting one of these distinctive birds is more likely now than ever — especially at feeders: quite a late-season treat.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos at susan@ncaves.com.

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Our deer mouse
has made
a tiny foray
outside
to bring back
and eat.
the head
of a daisy.

– Isabel Zuber

Life in the Real World

Creativity meets abundance in the all natural home and garden of the Holmes family

By Barbara J. Sullivan • Photographs By Andrew Sherman

Given a half-acre blank slate for a family-oriented house and garden, there is no end of design possibilities. But most people, if we're honest, don't stretch their imaginations too far beyond the predictable. What if you threw in a little creativity? You could design an outdoor-indoor space that celebrates the bounty of nature while offering up some kid magic at the same time. How about setting it up so kids could clamber across a swinging bridge to their own secret fort, whoosh down a zipline while friends zap them from a water balloon slingshot? A place where they could sleep under the stars in a hammock high up in the treetops, run barefoot through thick soft grass, stuff themselves with strawberries, raspberries, elderberries, blackberries, blueberries, goji berries — every sort of fruit and berry? Cuddle with a giant lizard, inspect the bees as they softly buzz around the hive stand, raise rescue dogs and cats, bring sea creatures home to live, watch the full moon rise over the osprey nest at night while they roast marshmallows in the fire pit with friends and family? It wouldn't hurt to have the scent of roses, mint, dill, lavender and a dozen other herbs and vegetables wafting gently in the breeze while someone strums the ukulele. Doesn't that sound, as the kids would say, "awesome"?

Awesome is a word the Holmes family uses a lot, whether they're talking about the zingy taste of a cherry tomato wrapped in arugula (both picked from the abundant raised vegetable garden and eaten on the spot) or how you can watch the egrets roost in the distant marsh trees at sunset when you're sitting on the lanai by the pool, or how great the new bat house is going to be. Their enthusiasm is infectious. Their home is an ecosystem of delight.

Michelle and Scott Holmes have professional careers, as a dentist and an attorney, respectively. Their son Carson, who is now 15, and daughter Piper, 8, are both busy with studies and friends — and happen to be actors as well. Life is something of a whirlwind. And yet the home life that the family has created has nothing of the LED-screen-dependent, convenience-food-laden, disconnected frenzy so emblematic of 21st-century life. They have created this rich and balanced physical space, as well as the way they live in it, through a unique combination of scientific research, artistic design and inspired exuberance. Inspiration is surely a key word here.

Years ago, when Carson was very young and very sick, his parents worried for his survival. They consulted a number of doctors before finding one who diagnosed celiac disease and told them his intestinal flora were destroyed. Eating organic, natural food had not been a priority up until then. But after studying the science behind healthy eating, it became their mission. And when it came time to build a new house in the Turtle Hall neighborhood near Wrightsville Beach, they decided that they would create a place where their children could play outside, roll in the grass, pick fresh vegetables and fruit, run barefoot and learn about the natural world on a daily basis.

The lawn, lush and green, has never had any chemicals sprayed on it. And, other than the nontoxic, natural fungicide neem oil, none of the fruits, vegetables, flowers or herbs has been sprayed. When the Holmeses designed the garden, they laid down a line of natural biochar around the edge of the property to absorb chemicals that might otherwise leech in from adjoining areas. "Everything's organic and safe," Michelle says. From the scientific reading she's done, she has learned that people who garden and get their hands dirty are happier and healthier because of the release of serotonin and dopamine that naturally occurs. Having gone through Carson's early medical crisis, she and Scott became aware that sprayed fruits and vegetables lose the beneficial bacteria needed for a healthy gut biome. "I don't

spray the vegetables," she says. "They're allowed to have bugs."

This is not a typical backyard garden for southeastern North Carolina. There are 50 feet of berry bushes and brambles running along raised walkways to make them easier to pick. There are five kinds of maypop vine for making smoothies — the maypop being the original source for Hawaiian punch. There are loquats. If you are lucky you'll get to sample Scott's delicious loquat jam. There are rows of lavender — used by the family in soaps and potpourris and sometimes added to whipped cream and served over strawberries. There are pomegranates, persimmons, figs, an apple tree, a pear tree and peach trees, muscadine grapes, pineapple guava, cucumbers, Chinese cabbage, arugula, eggplant, tomatoes, spinach, radishes, sorrel, lemongrass, scarlet runner beans, bee balm, nasturtiums, two kinds of parsley, three kinds of basil, four or five kinds of mint, dill, and generous explosions of rosemary. Subtropical bananas provide leaf-wrappers for grilled fish. All of it is thriving.

Have we left something out? Oh yes, loofahs. A profusion of loofahs. Piper invites friends over to make gifts out of them by adding soap and dehydrated crushed lavender from the garden. Sometimes they add homemade rose oil, distilled from the copious pink and yellow David Austin roses that smother the rose arches in late spring. On a summer evening she and her friends may be temporarily covered in red and black ladybugs as they release dozens of the beneficial insects into the garden at sunset. "It becomes a madhouse of children," says Michelle. "I wanted this to be the house where all the kids want to come — where the kids say, 'Let's play, let's hang out.'"

This love of the natural world extends to design of the house as well. After coming up the front path and being greeted at the door, a visitor is immediately ushered back into the outdoors, where an open-air lanai overlooks a clear blue swimming pool. And, no surprise, the pool is a carefully considered part of the family's life. Michelle and Scott wanted a bacteriostatic pool,

which uses copper plates and processes of ionization and oxidation with no need for chemicals. Because no one in Wilmington knew how to do it, they contacted the owner of a California company, who flew out and helped with the installation.

Adjacent to the pool, a small guest cabana houses the only TV on the property — for visitors who just can't do without. Inside the main house, the space was designed with an emphasis on common family-sharing spaces, including an open kitchen. The bedrooms are relatively small — just for sleeping and homework, not for hanging out. A window in the parents' room provides a bed-level view of the moon rising. There are two built-in play walls for the cats and a piece of furniture in the den, which will one day become the enclosure for Rhacodactylus leachianus, the largest of Carson's geckos. Carson previously curated a 55-gallon fish tank and a circular jellyfish tank, the only requirement being that he had to catch the inhabitants himself and bring them home. Local docks and tidal pools became frequent family haunts. At any one time, the tanks might have held flounder, pipe fish, spider fish, men-of-war, anemones, sea squirts, triggerfish or any of a dozen other aquatic species.

Because there is no TV and very limited "screen time," the family is actively engaged in the real, as opposed to virtual, world. Not only does everyone know about and appreciate the local plants and insects, but all four family members help weed the garden and raise the bees (four bee suits of varying sizes hang inside the back door). Everyone in the family cooks. It's a requirement. So is playing a musical instrument. Scott plays piano and violin, Carson sings and plays ukulele, Piper plays piano and ukulele. Michelle can't read music so she has a "cheater" ukulele called a populele with flashing lights telling her which keys to press.

It's a full, rich life that takes advantage of the ever-changing gifts of the natural world and manages to marry indoors and outdoors seamlessly. The design of the French-inspired vegetable and fruit gardens, the tree-top play area, the lanai and guesthouse and the main house itself are not only delightfully personal, but they are celebratory of life itself. Creativity meets abundance full on. If you visit you can't help but want to participate. You may just want to whip up a maypop smoothie, sit out under the apple tree and teach yourself the ukulele.

Barbara Sullivan is the author of Garden Perennials for the Coastal South *and a frequent lecturer on garden topics.*

Preservation Man

Watson Brown's eye for the beauty of backroads North Carolina

BY WILLIAM IRVINE

For Watson Brown, it was all about coming home. After a successful 30-year career as a city planner in Tarboro and Raleigh, he moved back to eastern North Carolina and restored his family home place, an 1854 plantation house. "Although it was a labor of love restoring the place my ancestors had built, it was also a pretty overwhelming and daunting task," he says. "I needed a break in my hard work routine, so I thought about photographing the historic houses in my home county of Edgecombe." And things just progressed from there. "I had never had any formal training in photography and only used it occasionally for my job as a city planner," says Brown. He now travels with his camera along the rural backroads of eastern North Carolina in search of his favorite subject: historic buildings, particularly those downtrodden and abandoned relics of an earlier time in our history.

Brown was always drawn to old houses while growing up in Edgecombe County (he is the fifth generation of his family to do so). "I was a weird kid. I can remember family trips where my focus was on architecture and crumbling old places and barns," he says. "On the desolate backroads heading to Lake Mattamuskeet, Knotts Island or Wilmington, my siblings would play games peering from the windows of my parents' old '55 Buick counting cows or something, while I was analyzing architecture.

"I remember in particular from the 1960s a badly deteriorated octagon house in Hyde County that fascinated me," he continues. "It is long gone now, but I can see it in my mind's eye like it was when I was 12."

Brown has also been involved in the preservation of the buildings he has photographed. He often sends pictures to regional representatives of

Church Front with Cross

Terra Ceia House

Halifax County

Whitaker's Rooflines

Magnolia Academy

Buzzards Over Embro

Potecasi House

Preservation North Carolina with the hope that they can find a buyer.

Brown's photographs are often imbued with a painterly quality, which he achieves through textures, shades and overlays that he manipulates on his computer. "I can use my mouse almost like a paintbrush to mix colors, shades and textures bolder or subtly remove them to create an effect that pleases my eye," he says. The result are works that are often reminiscent of the paintings of Edward Hopper, Francis Speight or Andrew Wyeth. "I love it when followers on Facebook or Instagram take that leap and make the comparison," he says.

And while his first subjects were in Edgecombe, Brown has now travelled to all the counties east of Raleigh and will soon be taking documentary trips farther south: "To date I have reached Duplin and Sampson in the southeast and up to Vance and Franklin northwest of my home base. I love the backroads of North Carolina!"

Watson Brown is represented by Gallery C, 540 N. Blount Street, Raleigh, North Carolina: galleryc.net/artists/watson-brown. Follow him on Facebook:carolinabackroads; and Instagram: @planterboy.

Mitchell House

To Bee Healthy

A new mentorship program grows interest in beekeeping across the Cape Fear region

By Virginia Holman

When I was a girl, bees weren't kept by my neighbors. Bees were common and everywhere — humming in fields of Queen Anne's lace, pollinating my aunts' vegetable gardens, buzzing in hollow tree cavities, occasionally slipping between the walls of abandoned homes to create their elaborate golden society. Even so, honey came not from family farm stands, but from the Be-Lo grocery store. The plastic bottle was molded in the shape of a little bear with a sporty yellow hat. Sometimes, my father would splurge on a thick glass jar of Florida orange blossom honey, this impulse purchase made because the waxy comb suspended in a sea of amber seemed both exotic and irresistible. Unlike the squeezable bear, the honey in that jar never lingered on the shelf long enough to crystallize. It was sweet, but also had a citrus tang that kept it from being cloying. You could (and I did) eat it by the spoonful.

I never thought much about bees when I was a kid, in much the same way that I never thought about air. Like most people, I took bees for granted. Then, about 10 years ago, beekeepers began reporting that many of their hives had disappeared. Entire colonies of worker bees vanished. This syndrome, dubbed colony collapse disorder, has vexed scientists and alerted us that we cannot take our bees for granted — we depend on bees to pollinate over a third of our crops. When you take into consideration other threats to bee populations, such as pesticides and habitat destruction, you begin to understand that the health of the human community is dependent on the health of the bee population.

As awareness has grown about the plight of the honeybee, many people have become so fascinated by these pollinators that they've become backyard beekeepers. With a little education and time, and a modest investment, aspiring beekeepers are often able to set up their first hive or two for $300 to $400.

Tom Rhyne, current president of the New Hanover County Beekeeper's Association, took a somewhat circuitous route to becoming a beekeeper. "I've been a beekeeper for about 15 years. I worked for UPS, and when I had a delivery route in Pender County, I decided that I was going to stop eating all this sugar and start eating healthy. And there was a beekeeper on my route. So I got raw honey and started eating it. Then I changed routes. My new route was near Hampstead, and I lost my honey source. One day I saw all these hives in a front yard near Olde Point. So one day, I walked up, knocked on the guy's door and said, 'Can I buy some honey?' He looked at me and said, 'Well, no.' And I shrugged and said, 'Well, OK,' and turned to head back to my truck. Then he said, 'But I can teach you.' That man, Burt Millette, became my mentor. At that time there wasn't a club in New Hanover or Pender counties, so I went to one in Onslow near my home. Now, through the New Hanover County Beekeeper's Association, I mentor other beekeepers."

The New Hanover County Beekeeper's Association offers a beekeeping certification course that helps first-time beekeepers learn the basics of beekeeping from master beekeepers, according to Rhyne: "We have a little test at the end where we take students out to one of the member's apiaries to teach them how to light the smoker, how to open up a colony, what to look for, and to get them comfortable handling the bees."

Rhyne says that the best time to take a class is early in the new year so you can get your hives set up "before the honey flow starts in April." Joining a beekeeping club is useful, he says, because it offers access to a community of experienced backyard and commercial beekeepers who can mentor and assist one another.

Beekeeping is also gaining interest among the millennial and post-millennial set. At UNCW there's a beekeeping club that helps educate and train students about bees and how to handle them. The club currently has five hives on campus, used as a teaching apiary, in a remote, low-traffic location.

Taylor Bragg, the current president of the UNCW Beekeeping Club, says that the club currently has about 120 members and a faculty adviser, Dr. Anthony Snider, professor of environmental sciences. Bragg says that she first became interested in beekeeping

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when her father acquired a hive. "Beekeeping is fascinating, and there's something that's just addictive about it. You become obsessed with your hive. Every time you open it, you wonder, How can I keep them healthy? How can I keep them happy?" This year, she says, the club plans to harvest 100 pounds of honey and sell it as a club fundraiser.

Since she grew up in a farming family, Bragg knows that beekeeping is an important way that people can help maintain robust bee populations. "There are so few feral hives nowadays due to development," says Bragg. She points out that many cash crops in North Carolina need bees to pollinate them. And in many places in the state, commercial beekeepers will assist farmers by trucking in their hives and renting them as pollinators. It's a common practice due in part to the size of commercial farms and the unreliability of our native bee populations. But it's not one without a few risks. Bragg points out that bees transported over long distances experience a great deal of stress. The bees aren't able to fly around, and the disruption of natural light for several days can alter the bees' behavior.

David Bridgers, a longtime beekeeper and vice president of the Columbus County Beekeepers Association, has rented out his hives for pollination contracts as a sideline business. Like Bragg, Bridgers admits he became a bit obsessed with beekeeping: "I bought two colonies as nucleus hives in 2000, and I just split and parlayed those into what I have now." It all began when an extension agent asked him to assist with the pollination of some butternut squash crops in Whiteville. "The grower wanted more colonies, so I kept developing new hives. Then more people started asking for help with pollination, and then I had all these hives. I got up to over 200 hives at one point. Let me tell you," he laughs, "I went from gainful employment to work when I had all those hives." He's shipped bees to Florida and as far as Bakersfield, California, to pollinate crops. These days, he's scaled back and now has about 100 hives from Hampstead to Whiteville to Porter's Neck.

At an educational event a few years back, Bridgers says an extension agent told him that "the average age of a beekeeper in North Carolina is between 55 and death." But now with the mentorship and community outreach of area beekeeping associations and clubs like the UNCW beekeeping club, younger beekeepers are starting their own hives. "Young people want to turn back to nature and are going toward organic gardening. They like to have natural areas in their yards, so keeping bees is part of all that." So when you discover your neighbor is keeping bees, don't be alarmed. After all, what gift could be as sweet as honey fresh from the hive?

To find a beekeeping club near you, visit www.ncbeekeepers.org/.

Virginia Holman lives and writes in Carolina Beach.

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The Manor Reborn

Rebirth of the Burgwin-Wright House

By William Irvine · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

John Burgwin was a mover and shaker in Colonial North Carolina. Born in Hereford, England, in 1731 and educated at Cambridge, by 1750 he had landed in Charleston, where he worked for a merchant firm that also had offices in North Carolina. Shortly thereafter, Burgwin resettled among the merchant elite of Wilmington, where he eventually became a prominent lawyer and financier. After an advantageous marriage to Margaret Haynes, of Castle Haynes Plantation, the daughter of a wealthy planter, Burgwin received a number of important appointments, including as private secretary to Gov. Arthur Dobbs. Gov. William Tryon appointed Burgwin treasurer of the Province of North Carolina. He also served as the member of the General Assembly from Bladen County. And most importantly, he managed to deftly walk the tightrope between Whig and Tory (an astute tactic for a merchant).

Burgwin amassed his vast fortune through real estate. "He was a flipper," says Christine Lamberton, the director of the Burgwin-Wright House and Gardens. "Like George Washington, Burgwin was a second son, and second sons were a lot more anxious about their financial situation." At one time he owned seven properties, among them his wife's plantations, Castle Haynes and The Hermitage, March Castle at Lake Waccamaw, and vast forest holdings in Duplin County and Fayetteville. He also owned several houses in downtown Wilmington. Not to mention five ships that sailed to England and the Caribbean. He also owned more than 200 slaves.

As more of Burgwin's time was spent attending to his far-flung

holdings, he realized that he needed a house in Wilmington to conduct business and entertain. Soon a lot was found on Market Street, and an elegant two-story Georgian townhouse began to rise, perched on top of a masonry cellar that used to house the early city jail.

"People often come to the house and ask, 'How much did this cost to build?'," says Lamberton. "Well, for Burgwin, it was next to nothing. He had longleaf pine on his plantations, the house was built with enslaved labor, so it didn't cost him anything at all. Even the decorative moldings were based on designs from Philadelphia but rendered by enslaved workers."

As you look around the elegant Burgwin-Wright house today, it is immediately apparent that this was a house built for entertaining: The dining room occupies half of the second floor. "This house was just for business and parties. A showhouse to convey Burgwin's prosperity," says Lamberton. "You did business downstairs and if you were socially accepted you might be invited to a dinner party upstairs."

So it is exciting news that thanks to the generosity of Lillian Bellamy Boney — a preservationist and longtime member of the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of North Carolina,

the stewards and saviors of the property — the house has received a generous gift that has paid for a much needed restoration, its first in nearly 70 years.

The gift arrived in February 2018, right after the house museum had reglazed and replaced all 41 of its windows with historic glass. It seemed logical to proceed full-steam ahead with the museum's checklist of projects. "It was totally unexpected," says Lamberton. "I never thought we would close for nine weeks."

Local architectural historian and paint consultant Ed Turberg was recruited, and he conducted paint analyses to scrape down and identify the first colors of each room. "The house was last painted in the 1950s, and they were totally Colonial Williamsburg colors — cranberry and gray," says Lamberton. The results were very surprising. Original analysis started on the third floor revealed variations of green. "We were completely surprised by the richness of the colors," says Lamberton. "The interaction of beautiful light makes sense for the colors of the rooms."

And it seems that Burgwin was *very* keen on green. Upstairs, the dining room has been repainted a cool, luxurious shade of cucumber soup. "At first I didn't understand the color, but when the gold mirrors and silver were added, it all made sense," says Lamberton. "This was a room to show off, in a subtle way. To be here for dinner, with the breeze coming in the window, the candlelight reflecting off the gold and silver must have been a remarkable experience for a visitor." Two upstairs bedrooms also revealed greens: The guest bedroom is a vibrant green, matched using Kendal Green by Sherwin-Williams. The master bedroom features a semigloss trim in Jadite, also by Sherwin-Williams. "To have such a rich color is a show of status," says Lamberton. "At Mount Vernon, Washington specified glossy paint to reflect back the outdoor light and color."

Descending the fine late Georgian staircase, the first thing one notices is the stunning original heart-pine floors. "These had been waxed and stained for years, causing the furniture to get stuck in the wax," says Lamberton. "Never a good idea, because longleaf pine is already so dense that the wax does not get absorbed." The wax was removed and the floors lightly refinished.

The new paint colors have helped the museum's decision to flip the locations of the parlor and business office downstairs. The parlor is now a bright and creamy white; historically it was not uncommon for sitting rooms to be white or yellow. The public office, formerly the parlor, is now right off the front door. "This made much more sense," says Lamberton. "People could come in from outside to do their business without entering the rest of the house."

The decorating scheme has been changed as well. Heavy 19th-century pieces were put into storage and replaced with family heirlooms from the Burgwin and Wright families. "One of the most extraordinary things is that many of Burgwin's descendants still live in North Carolina, Virginia and Pennsylvania," says Lamberton. "Facebook has been a valuable tool — many of the descendants have gotten involved through our Facebook page."

The overall effect is stunning. So what's next on the wish list? "Window treatments and curtains for all the rooms would be a long-term dream," she says with a smile. And there is a book about the Burgwin-Wright House in the works. "We have done all the research, but we want the house to be picture-perfect first." It seems to be well on its way.

The Burgwin-Wright House and Gardens, 224 Market St., Wilmington. Open Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Guided tours are given on the hour. For more information, call 910-762-0570.

William Irvine is the senior editor of Salt.

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ALMANAC

September

By Ash Alder

September is the golden hour of summer.

Soon, the squash blossoms will disappear. Ditto fresh okra, watermelon, sweet corn and roadside stands. The crickets will grow silent, and the black walnut will stand naked against a crisp winter sky.

But right now, in this moment, everything feels soft, dreamy, light.

In the meadow, goldenrod glows brilliant among Joe-Pye and wild carrot.

In the garden, goldfinches light upon the feeder, swallowtails dance between milkweed and aster, and just beyond the woodland path, the hive hums heavy.

September is raw honey on the tongue.

I think of my Devon Park rental, retrieving the old push mower from the woodshed and discovering a colony of honeybees busy beneath the creaky floorboard. In the space between the floor joists: 40 pounds of liquid gold. Gratitude arrives with the scent of ginger lilies. I exhale *thanks* to the apiarist for transporting the bees to his own backyard — and for leaving just a taste of their honey for me.

September is master of subtly. Satiety following an electric kiss; anticipation for the next one. Delight in this golden hour, this taste of sweet nectar, this gentle reminder to be here now.

Sweet and Good

September is National Honey Month. According to the National Honey Board (exactly what it sounds like: a group dedicated to educating consumers about the benefits and uses of all things you-know-what), the average honeybee produces 1 1/2 teaspoons of honey over the course of its entire life. Here's another nugget that might surprise you: A typical hive can produce between 30 to 100 pounds of honey a year. To produce just one pound, a colony must collect nectar from about 2 million flowers. Think about that the next time you hold in your hands a jar of this pure, raw blessing.

Wish to make mead? Honey, water, yeast and patience.

But if pudding sounds more like your bag, here's a recipe from the National Honey Board:

Honey Chia Seed Pudding

Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

2 cups coconut milk
6 tablespoons chia seeds
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons honey
Fresh berries
Granola

Directions:

Combine coconut milk, chia seeds, vanilla and honey in a medium bowl. Mix well until the honey has dissolved. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, but preferably overnight.

Stir well and divide the pudding into individual portions.

Serve with fresh berries. Add granola, if desired.

(I recommend adding a few organic cacao nibs too.)

Pecan Harvest

Yes, the time has come. If you're lucky enough to have one or more pecan trees growing in your backyard, then you know that the earliest nuts fall in September. And those who are lucky enough to know the ecstasy of homemade pecan pie will tell you that the efforts of the harvest are worth it. Or just ask one of the neighborhood squirrels.

Here's a trick. If you're wondering whether a pecan is fit to crack, try shaking a couple of them in the palms of your hands first. *Listen.* Do they rattle? Likely no good. Full pecans sound solid, but the way to develop an ear is trial and error. You'll catch on.

And in the spirit of Mabon, the pagan celebration of the autumnal equinox, consider offering libations to the mighty pecan tree. My bet is they'll relish your homemade mead as much as any of us.

'Tis the last rose of summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone.
— Thomas Moore,
The Last Rose of Summer, 1830

As the Wheel Turns

The autumnal equinox occurs on Saturday, Sept. 22, just two days before the full Harvest Moon. Speaking of, if you're gardening by the moon, plant annual flowers (pansies, violets, snapdragons and mums) and mustard greens during the waxing moon (Sept. 9–21). Onion, radish, turnip, and other vegetables that bear crops underground should be planted during the dark (aka waning) moon. According to the *Old Farmer's Almanac*, old-time farmers swear this makes for a larger, tastier harvest.

September 2018

Arts Calendar

Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*

9/7-9

Jazz at the Mansion

9/13

Harvest Dinner

9/27

9/1-2 Violet

8 p.m.; matinees on 9/2 and 9/9 at 3 p.m. Thalian Hall presents the Opera House Theatre Company's production of *Violet*, based on the novel *The Ugliest Pilgrim*, by North Carolina writer Doris Betts, with music by Jeannie Tesori. Admission: $32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/4 An Evening with Robert Cray

An evening with the Grammy-award-winning blues, soul and R&B musician. Admission: $24-$48. Wilson Center, 703 N Third Street, Wilmington. For info: (910) 362-7999 or tickets@capefearstage.com.

9/7-9 Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*

7:30 p.m.; Sunday matinee at 3 p.m. The Thalian Association Youth Theatre presents Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*. Admission: $15. Hannah Block 2nd Street Stage, 120 S 2nd St., Wilmington. More info: (910) 251-1788 or thalian.org.

9/7-9 Wilmington Boat Show

Friday, 12- 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Wilmington Boat Show takes place at various locations in the city, among them the Port City Marina (in-water displays), Wilmington Convention Center (exhibits, fishing and sailing seminars, boat displays), and the Battleship North Carolina (children's activities, boat displays). Admission: $5-$15. For more information: (864)250-9713 or wilmingtonboatshow.com.

9/8 Get Your Stomp On

1:00 p.m. Bring your dancing feet down to Rose Hill, NC, for the 42nd annual Grape Stomp celebration at Duplin Winery with live music, wine tastings, food, vineyard tours and, of course, a grape-stomping contest! Advance tickets: $20. Duplin Winery, 505 N. Sycamore Street, Rose Hill, North Carolina. For more info: 800-774-9634 or duplinwinery.com.

9/11 New Beginnings

New Beginnings Writing Sessions is offering an eight-week story-building class for women. Led by book author, magazine writer and *Salt* contributor Virginia Holman, this class offers useful, nurturing lessons for fiction and memoir/essay writers in a uniquely supportive environment. Beginning/intermediate level. Sept. 11 and subsequent Tuesdays from 1-3 p.m. in Carolina Beach. $275 includes a 30-minute consultation on Nov. 13 or by appointment. For more information: virginiaholman1@gmail.com.

9/12 She ROCKS Fundraising Luncheon

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. She ROCKS, a nonprofit organization that funds research for ovarian cancer, hosts its fifth annual fundraising lunch. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. For more information and tickets: (910) 616-4286 info@she-rocks.org.

9/13 Jazz at the Mansion

6:30 p.m. Bring your blanket, lawn chairs and chill on the lawn of the Bellamy Mansion, where you will hear the smooth sounds of Mangroove featuring the Ariel Pocock Group. Beer and wine available. Admission: $10-$18. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market St., Wilmington. For more info: (910) 251-3700 or info@bellamymansion.org.

9/14-15 Carolina Beach Dragon Boat Regatta & Festival

Come to Carolina Beach for an exciting weekend of dragon boat racing and fun, featuring a Saturday 300m race along the shores of the Carolina Beach Yacht Basin. Proceeds from the event will benefit Step Up for Soldiers, a nonprofit that provides renovations and social services for recently disabled veterans. Teams (22-25 members) are encouraged to sign up. Admission: Free for spectators. Carolina Yacht Basin and Marina, 216 Canal Drive, Carolina Beach. For more information and registration: carolinabeachdragonboat.com.

9/15 1918 Flu Pandemic Tour

10 a.m. Local historian David Rice and Oakdale superintendent Eric Kozen will lead a historical walking tour through Oakdale Cemetery that focuses on the 1918 flu pandemic, which killed more people than WWII. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 N 15th St., Wilmington. For more info: (910) 762-5682 or oakdalecemetery.org.

9/15 Native Plant Festival

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Come to the New Hanover County Arboretum for the Native Plant Festival, a celebration of Cape Fear's local plant species. Activities include nature activities for children,

food trucks, native plant vendors, a seed swap and giveaway, as well as displays by local plant specialists. Admission: Free. For more info: (910)-547-4390 or arboretum.nhcgov.com.

9/15 Pier-2-Pier Swim Race

9 a.m. The Pier-2-Pier Swim's course is the 1.7-mile stretch of ocean between Johnnie Mercer's Pier and Crystal Pier. Awards given for male and female swimmers in both under and over-40 categories. Proceeds will benefit the Wilmington Family YMCA's Swim Team-CFAC. Admission: Free for spectators; $40-$55 registration for swimmers. Johnnie Mercer's Pier, 23 E Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. For more information: (910) 251-9622.

9/15-16 Poplar Grove Summer Harvest Festival

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Poplar Grove Plantation hosts its Summer Harvest Festival, featuring lawn and carnival games, arts and crafts vendors, Mr. Twisters Wondrous Balloon Creations, barnyard tours and wagon rides, and a midmorning sing-along. Admission: $5 ages 2 and up. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. For more information: (910) 686-9518 or poplargrove.org.

9/19 Turn NC Blue

7 p.m. Join Wylie Cash, Clyde Edgerton, Celia Rivenbark and other North Carolina writers at Theatre Now for a fundraiser in support of Turn NC Blue, a group dedicated to election of progressive candidates in Raleigh and Washington, DC, this fall. Hors d'oeuvres, beer and wine will be served. Theater Now, 19 S 10th Street, Wilmington. For more information and tickets: www.turnncblue.org.

9/20 UNCW Men's Basketball Tip-Off Dinner

6 p.m. Come to the third annual dinner, which features guest speaker Brad Brownell, former UNCW men's basketball coach and currently coach at Clemson. Proceeds benefit the UNCW men's basketball program. UUNCW Burney center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. For tickets and information: (910) 962-3236 or uncwsports.com.

9/22 High Strung

7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra presents "High Strung," featuring harp duo Lilac 94 as the opening night of their Masterworks series. The program includes Karl Jenkins' *Over the Stone* and Rachmaninov's *Symphony No. 2*. Wilson Center, 703 N 3rd St., Wilmington. For tickets and information: (910) 362-7999 or wilmingtonsymphony.org.

9/20-23 *Agnes of God*

8 p.m. Big Dawg Productions presents *Agnes of God*, John Pielmeier's electrifying stage play about a novice nun who gives birth and claims the child is a virgin conception. Tickets: $18-$25. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle St., Wilmington. For tickets and information: (910) 367-5237 or bigdawgproductions.org.

9/26-10/1 Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall

The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall honors Americans who served during the Vietnam War. This 288-foot replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which bears the names of the 58,000 men and women who perished in the war, will be on view 24 hours a day at Independence Mall. Admission: Free. Independence Mall, 3500 Oleander Drive, Wilmington.

9/27 An Epicurean Evening

Thirty chefs from local restaurants are going plate-to-plate and glass-to-glass to compete for top prizes at Wilmington's Epicurean Evening, a dinner to benefit the Methodist Home for Children in Raleigh. Tickets: $150-$10,000. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt St., Wilmington. For information: wilmingtonee.com.

9/27 Harvest Dinner

6-9 p.m. The Bellamy Mansion will host its Harvest Dinner, a fundraiser for the museum featuring a multi-course meal prepared by some of North Carolina's most celebrated chefs, including Dean Neff from Pin Point restaurant, Ashley Capps and Travis Schulz from Buxton Hall BBQ, and Lydia Clopton from Love, Lydia. There will also be live music and a silent auction. Tickets: $150. Reservations are required. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market St., Wilmington. For tickets and info: (910) 251-3700 x 306 or cgonzalez@bellamymansion.org.

9/28-30 North Carolina Shell Show

9 a.m.-5 p.m. The 43rd annual North Carolina Shell Show takes place at the Coastline Conference Center, bringing together collectors, shell dealers and naturalists. Admission: $3-$4. Coastline Conference and Events Center, 503 Nutt St., Wilmington. For more information: (336) 692-4492 or ncshellclub.com.

9/28-10/7 Pippin

7:30 p.m. Thalian Association presents the Tony Award-winning Stephen Schwarz musical *Pippin*, the story of a young prince who longs to find passion and adventure in his life. Tickets: $16-$32. Matinee performances on Sept. 30 and Oct. 7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington.

9/29 Southport Wooden Boat Show

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Come spend the day in Southport, where you will find a variety of events for wooden boat enthusiasts, among them wooden boats on exhibition, in-water boats, boat rides, model boat and photo exhibition, and a wooden boat building demonstration. Admission: Free. West Moore Street and South Caswell Avenue, Southport. For more information: (910) 477-2787 or southportwoodenboatshow.com.

9/29 Brunswick County Intercultural Festival

10 a.m.-4 p.m. A celebration of world cultures, the 14th annual Brunswick County Intercultural Festival will take place on the campus of Brunswick Community College, featuring an international village, ethnic food trucks and vendors, multicultural performances and a children's workshop. Admission: Free. Rain or shine. Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road, Bolivia. For information: (910) 842-6566 or bcifestival.org.

9/30 Low Country Boil and Brew

5 p.m.-8 p.m. The North Carolina Coastal Federation holds its annual Low Country Boil and Brew at the Blockade Runner Beach Resort. In addition to local shrimp, live music and yard games, there will be a coastal-themed silent auction and live music from Into the Fog. Tickets: $50 for members; $60 for non-members. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach. For more information: 910-509-2838 or nccoast.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday

Wrightsville Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

DINING GUIDE

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CALENDAR

Tuesday

Wine Tasting

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 S Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fotunateglass.com.

Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A night of live music performed by the area's best Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join in the fun. Admission: Free. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S Fifth Ave., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday

Free Wine Tasting at Sweet n Savory Cafe

5 p.m. – 8 p.m. Sample delicious wines for free. Pair them with a meal, dessert, or appetizer and learn more about the wines of the world. Live music starts at 7. Admission: Free. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.swetnsavorycafe.com.

Weekly Exhibition Tours

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. A weekly tour of the iconic Cameron Arts Museum, featuring presentations about the various exhibits and the selection and installation process. Cameron Arts Museum, 3201 S 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartsmuseum.org.

Ogden Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Poplar Grove Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday

Wrightsville Beach Brewery Farmers Market

2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Come support local farmers and

artisans every Thursday afternoon in the beer garden at the Wrightsville Beach Brewery. Shop for eggs, veggies, meat, honey, and handmade crafts while enjoying one of the Brewery's tasty beers. Stay for live music afterwards. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-4938 or www.wbbeer.com.

Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to both beginners and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday and Saturday

Cape Fear Museum Little Explorers

10 a.m. Meet your friends in Museum Park for fun, hands-on activities! Enjoy interactive circle time, conduct exciting experiments, and play games related to a weekly theme. Perfect for children ages 3 to 6 and their adult helpers. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Blackwater Adventure Tours

Join in an educational guided boat tour from downtown Wilmington to River Bluffs, exploring the mysterious beauty of the Northeast Cape Fear River. See website for schedule. River Bluffs, 1100 Chair Road, Castle Hayne. Info: (910) 623-5015 or www.riverbluffsliving.com.

Saturday

Carolina Beach Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 and Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek

8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Weekly gathering of vetted vendors with fresh produce straight from the farm. Sign up for the weekly newsletter for advanced news of the coming weekend's harvest. 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: thewilmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

Riverfront Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Taste of Downtown Wilmington

2:15 p.m., 2:45 p.m., and 3:15 p.m. A weekly gourmet food tour by Taste Carolina, featuring some of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Each time slot showcases different food. See website for details. Admission: $55–75. Riverwalk at Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 237-2254 or www.tastecarolina.net/wilmington/.

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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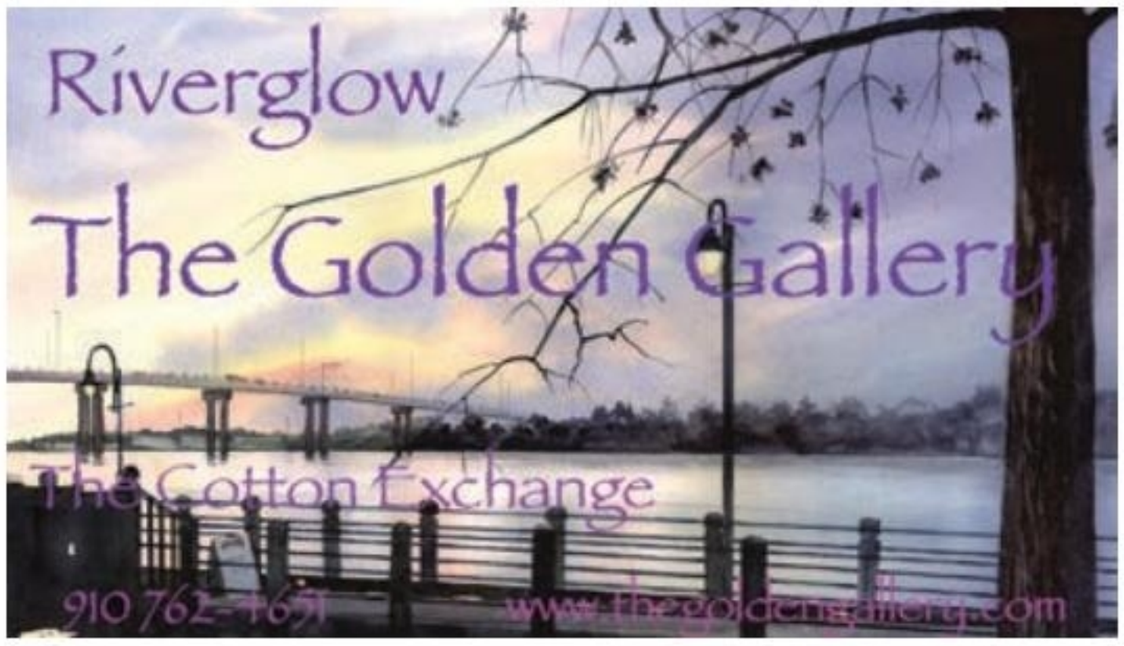

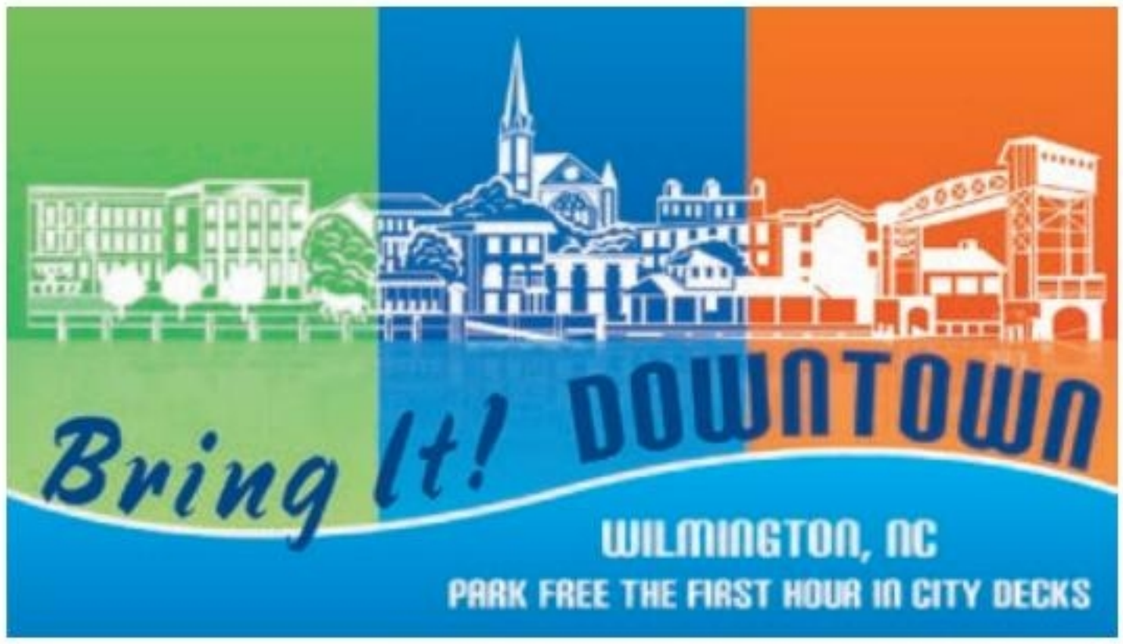

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Port City People

Wright Holman Shrimperoo

Hosted by the Wrightsville Beach Museum and Causeway Cafe

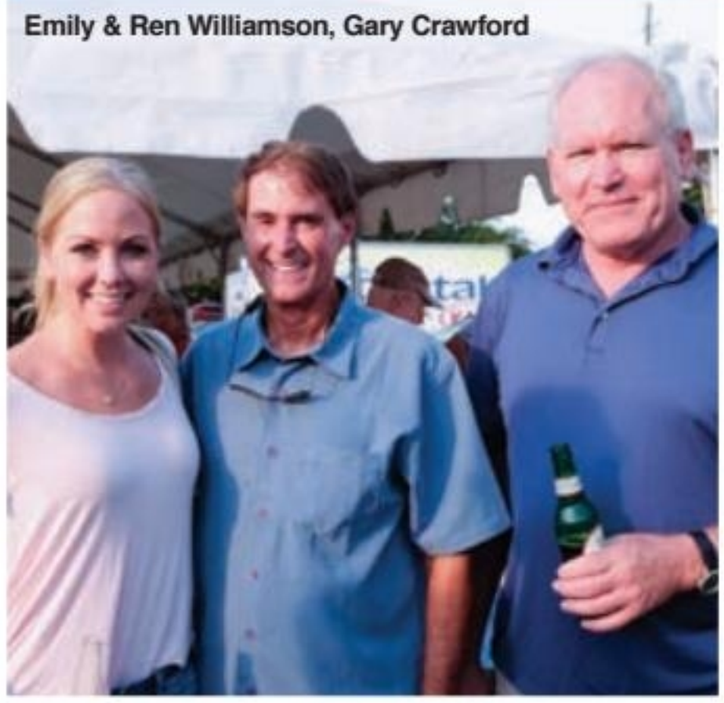
Saturday, July 28, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

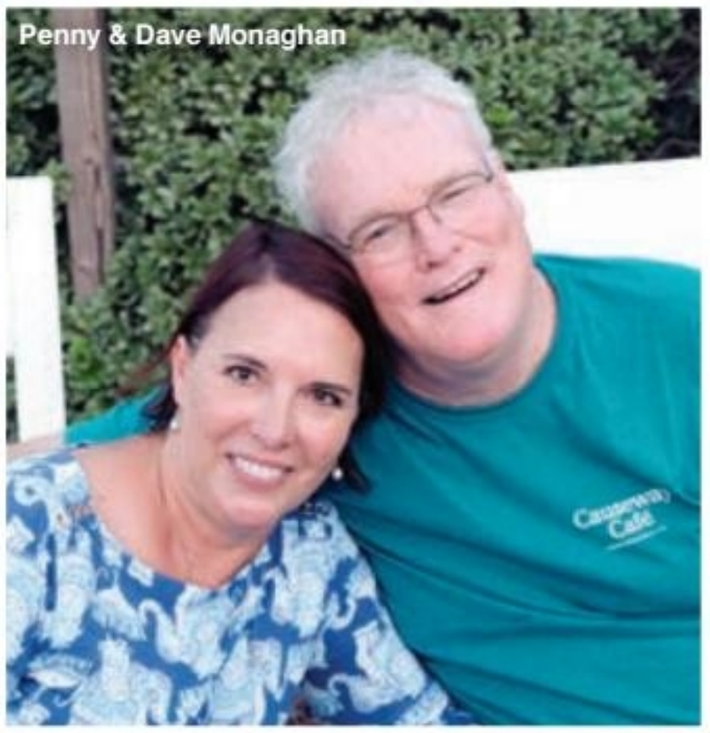
Ronnie Hunt, Jim Hardee

Roger & Marisa Sica, Kelly & Gilbert Catino

Peggy Daughtry, Jo Cobb


Emily & Ren Williamson, Gary Crawford

Peter & Mary Kurki, Debbie & Bill Rudisill


Penny & Dave Monaghan

Mary Lynne Hunt, Julia Lackey

Steve & Janice Hyman, Jerry Ploysky, Deb Schoenhoff

Elizabeth Mars, John Wessell

Tim Brock, Kathy Shelton, Teri Brock, Debbi Beverage, William Beverage

Bill Clark, Madeline Flagler, Catherine Butler, Cori Burns, Happy Clark

Port City People

Closing Reception for the Lumina Festival of the Arts

Cultural Arts Center, UNCW

Sunday, July 29, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Nancy Podrasky Carson, Nancy King, Mark Sorensen

Cera Finney, Michelle Lerch

Joshua Collier, Gina Gambony

Suzette Hartsfiel, Shaunte Jordan

Kristen Brogden, Amanda McRaven

Kate Muhlstein, Linda Webb

Patricia & Daniel Kopchick

Joshua Collier, Nancy King

Joe Hickman

Jeffrey Jones, Joshua Collier, Shannon Kessler Dooley, John Dooley

Amanda McRaven, Gina Gambony, Clark & Helena Spencer

Port City People

6th Annual Pipeline to a Cure

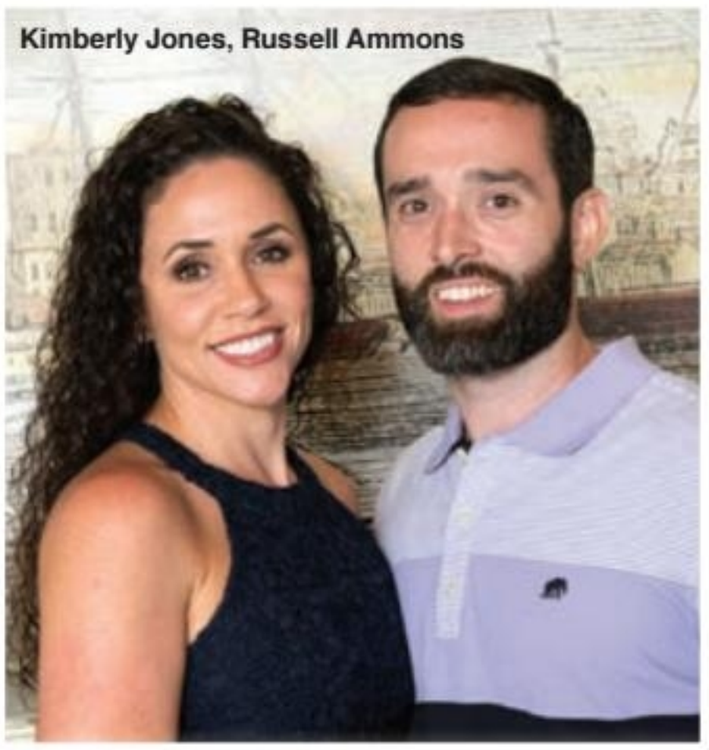
Benefiting the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

Saturday, August 4, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Ashli Hale, Sean Johnson

Dr. Michael & Jackie Feasel, Ivey & Kevin Sikorski


Kimberly Jones, Russell Ammons

Jennifer Foster, Abigail Dawson

CT & Holly Shaw, Valerie & Peter Thurstone

Colton & Nicole Ekstrom

Sarah & Joe Bonfiglio

Campbell & Nicoa Dunn, Kelly Starbuck

RJ & Jessica Hernandez

Ashley & Brice Gibson

Don & Sandy Spiers

John Ridenhour Kelly McCallion

Mark & Leslie Tyler

Port City People

Jazz at the Mansion

Hosted by the Bellamy Mansion
and the Cape Fear Jazz Society

Thursday, August 9, 2018

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

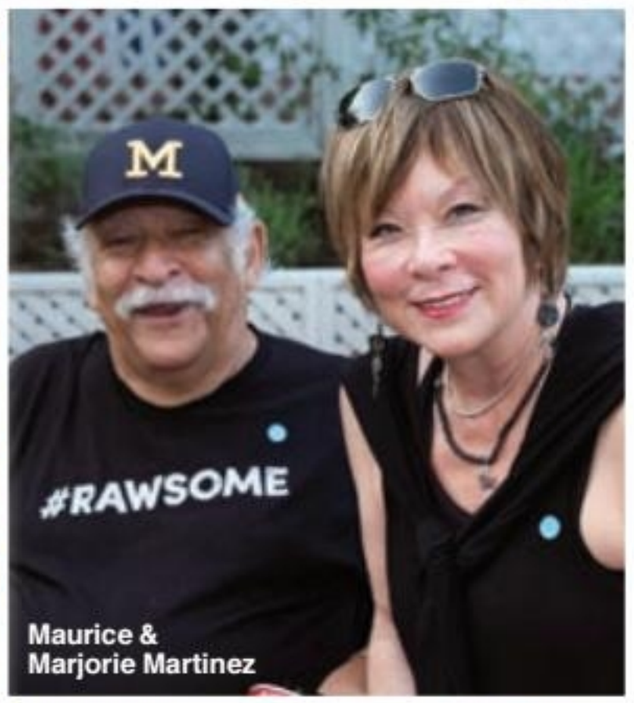
Mike Gilmaitin, Susan Parker, Jesse & Deb Shaw

Barbara St. Peter, Peter Zukoski

Bill Lawson & Renee Sanders-Lawson

Ludovico Zirilli, Neah Farr, Leonardo Zirilli

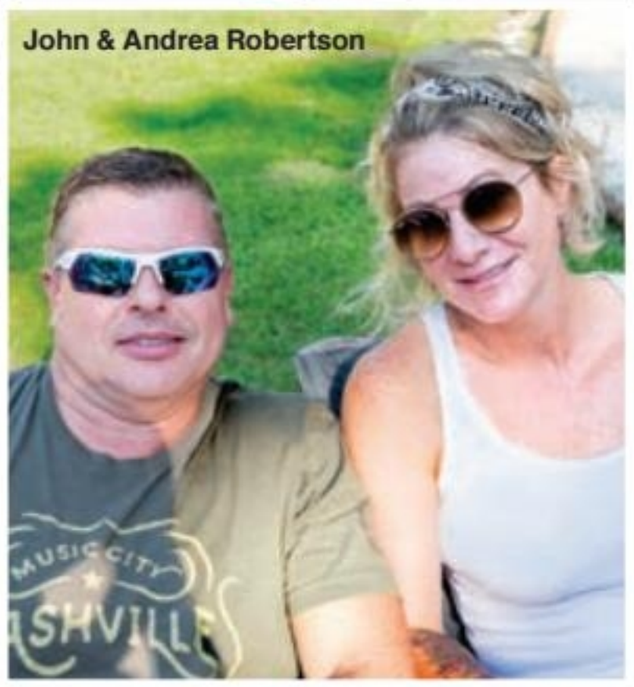
Oba & Barbara Akinwole



Maurice & Marjorie Martinez

Carter, Kelly & Annie Jewell

Carol & Gregory Miller


John & Andrea Robertson

Benny Hill

Simone Allen

Barbara Sullivan, Richard Schmetterer

Lara & Rob Murphrey

Cool Temps, Hot Dishes

September's stars serve up a medley of sweet and sour

By Astrid Stellanova

September brings us the fall, thank the Lord! We get a respite from the sweat and vapors. Now that it's cool enough to go back into the kitchen, take a look at the calendar. There's a slew of official food-related observations that sound suspiciously like they came from a bunch of hungry Southern cooks at a family reunion. It's as if somebody started sampling the home brew, and after a few, couldn't agree on any one delicacy to celebrate, so they included the whole menu. Maybe this is how come September is not only National Biscuit Month, but also National Potato Month and National Chicken Month.

If these honors were indeed invented by Southerner Star Children that home brew musta been pretty good: They left National Banana Puddin' lovers Month until November. — Ad Astra, Astrid

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Sugar Lump, there was a time when you had less going for you than a scared Beagle in a hailstorm. Now, you have a busier social life than the Kardashians. Everybody is watching, wondering, waiting for you to make a move and follow suit. If you still have a little bit of Snoopy in your soul, lie down, put your feet up and think first.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
It is entirely up to you if you want to direct everybody in the drama of life, but it would sure help if you had any idea about what you are doing. The advice you have sworn by is about as helpful as a room deodorizer in a bus station. Change gears or you may strip the transmission, Sugar Pie. Recalibrate.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Oopsies were made. That's a charitable way of saying you're wrong more often than right lately, but enough people stand by you anyway. Charisma? Yup. Regrets? Nope. But Sugar, don't squander all this goodwill in one month.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
I wish I had a restraining order for everybody who tried to attack you for having an "original" idea that was behind its time. Not a typo. Honey, if you can just pretend to regret being too big for your britches you might not get your comeuppance.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
The seasonal change has got you all flubbed up. But as soon as the first cool evening settles, all will feel better and brighter. There's a whole lot of hot air hitting you from a close acquaintance that has Spam for brains. Grab a fan and pay them no mind.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
You've been on the sliding board of life and it has felt like the first time on the playground — scary, too fast and at least a little skin left on the sliding board on the way down. But you arrived at a safe place, Honey Bun, and things do go right at last.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
You've made an important correction, Sweet Thing, and you get to reap the benefits. You've shared a lot of credit, helped others and boosted your karma. It wasn't easy to make the change you did but you put your big pants on and did it.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Two people are walking back into your life and there will be a test of your strategic powers. This is destiny, Sugar, so just remember that you are in the Schoolhouse of Life for a reason. Your best will be good enough and you shall pass without scars.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
You've got a generous, intelligent, powerful nature, and when people get on your good side they are in for a treat. It is myth-making to watch you do your creative best. These times remind your friends why they hang in there, and they do.

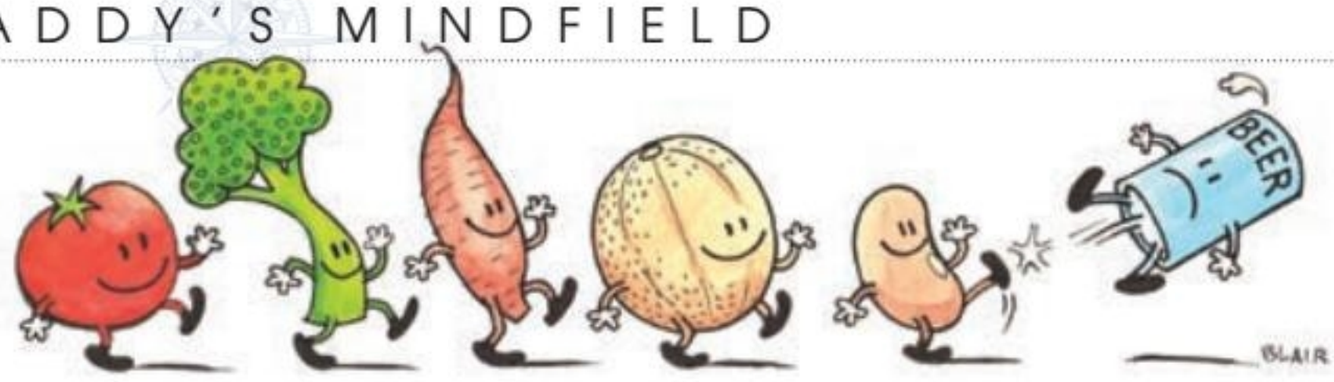
Gemini (May 21–June 20)
You cleared a big hurdle and now you graduate to the next. Your abilities to redeem yourself never fail to amaze — and sometimes stupefy. In the end, Buttercup, there is another task to face. It will look easy after summer's challenge.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Lordamercy, if you were surprised by the breaks you got, you never let it show. You have a better poker face than the professionals. The cards are in your favor, and you know how to play them. So deal or draw. The game is yours, Sweet Thing, but don't hold 'em.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
You are legendarily strong and stoic. You are a born leader and you know it. But you also have a shadow side that is the opposite. When did you last let anyone know that? It is possible to show that side to others and not lose a bit of face. Try it, Sugar.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

My New Food Home



By Clyde Edgerton

This is a story about a way to get healthier without medicine, through food. No, don't stop reading, please.

I had 20 migraines between October 2016 and April 2017. I didn't know what to do. I thought about hitting myself in the head with a hammer, then decided to see my doctor. She gave me a prescription for migraines. One pill made me feel so bad I decided I'd rather have the headaches. I checked in with a neurologist, who basically told me he didn't know what I should do, beyond keeping a migraine diary to discover my "triggers." I envisioned a life of diary writing with continued migraines. I wanted quick relief—I wanted a relief app.

A friend suggested a book: *The Migraine Brain*. I read it. It had a bunch of "Don't Eat This" lists, and while the lists didn't always agree, they did overlap on certain foods. I was desperate. I went cold turkey and stopped eating or drinking anything beyond veggies, brown rice, fruit, and water—with beans for protein, and sparkling water for some pizzazz in my life.

I admit that I've silently looked down my nose at vegetarians. I once wrote in a book that when new parents get the baby seat all situated and fastened into the car, a cousin is going to come along, say it's not put in right and then call the authorities. That cousin, I said, will be a vegetarian. If that's funny, I've told folks, it's because it's true. Now I are one myself. (From that old joke: "I always wanted to be a grammarian and now I are one.")

Here I was looking to become not only a vegetarian, but also a vegan—somebody I once visualized as soft-spoken and polite, wearing flip-flops, apt to be found sitting in a dark back room, listening to a podcast about . . . oh I don't know—animals.

I was willing to sit anywhere and drink spinach smoothies and listen to even classical music if that would help stop the headaches. I would become a veggie vegan spokesperson. A veggie vegan warrior, maybe—*if* by chance the headaches stopped.

I cut out all gluten, sweets, dairy products, alcohol, soy, bananas (the only fruit on most all the no-eat lists in the book I read), eggs, coffee and meat. I was that desperate.

Beans and rice, with sautéed onions and peppers, became my first island of refuge—my first meal friend.

This meat/potato/biscuit puppy was surprised that the world didn't collapse. My fresh food list led to a new—I've got to say it—happiness. Because the migraines stopped cold—as if a miracle had descended—and a respite from the pain of migraines made up for any initial worry about food.

During the first month of different eating habits, I discovered excellent gluten-free breads in the freezer section at the grocery store while rediscovering simple cornbread (no gluten), corn chips, oat-meal, and ah . . . homemade granola. Refried beans became a favorite—and in any Mexican restaurant I could find a friendly meal. (Hold the cheese, please.)

More and more restaurants are catering to people who eat the way I now eat. You might be surprised. I've found great sushi. Sometimes with sushi I cheat a tad with a little white fish meat, as in the "Lean Queen" specialty roll at Yoshi Sushi Bar on Racine. I've called for it for takeout so many times—they see the incoming number and answer with, "Got it."

When you are somehow restricted, a result may be liberation. Narrowed choices may bring greater enjoyment.

I discovered a bean burger cut up on a salad at PT's.

I started satisfying my sweet tooth *big time* with cantaloupe, honeydew melons, and sweet potatoes—two in the oven on aluminum foil, hit 350 degrees and the timer for 1:37. And a rice cake with almond butter and honey is succulent.

And, listen . . . *ice cream*. I've screamed for it all my life. Several non-dairy, non-sugar (or very low sugar) ice creams are out there. Try it before knocking it. I make a tiny milkshake several times a week: a few ounces of almond milk and with a couple scoops of *Nada Moo* or S.O. ice cream substitute.

I lost 20 pounds in three weeks—and a year later, I'm still down 20. It helps that I'm walking two miles a day.

Narrowed choices have forced my finding really good recipes. I look forward to breakfast like never before: a layer of frozen blueberries, a layer of gluten-free granola with a few roasted pecans or maybe some trail mix for crunch, then a layer of a favorite in-season fruit with a dash of salt. Top off with ice cold almond milk (or hemp milk or flax milk). A dessert for me is often pecans and strawberries with strong decaf coffee. My old molecules have accepted new molecules coming through the door. Did I mention *homemade* granola? Or toast, avocado and fresh tomato? Gluten free pizza crust—served in many pizza parlors now?

I did try one steak a couple months ago. It landed in my stomach like a hiking boot.

My last physical exam showed lower cholesterol than ever, lowest weight in 50 years (by 20 pounds), and lower blood pressure than ever. You are what you eat.

My impetus to change my eating habits was 20 migraines in a few months. I've heard that a new habit materializes in two weeks to a year. I've passed the one-year mark. And yes, I've adjusted a bit: I'm back on an occasional egg and a serving of fish. But there are many reasons not to yield—not to return to my old-food home. I have a new new, better, tastier food home.

If you think you could feel better—consider cutting the gut-makers. Go lean. At least don't scoff at us vegetarians, vegans, and hybrids. Consider joining us. Try it for one month.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and most recently, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

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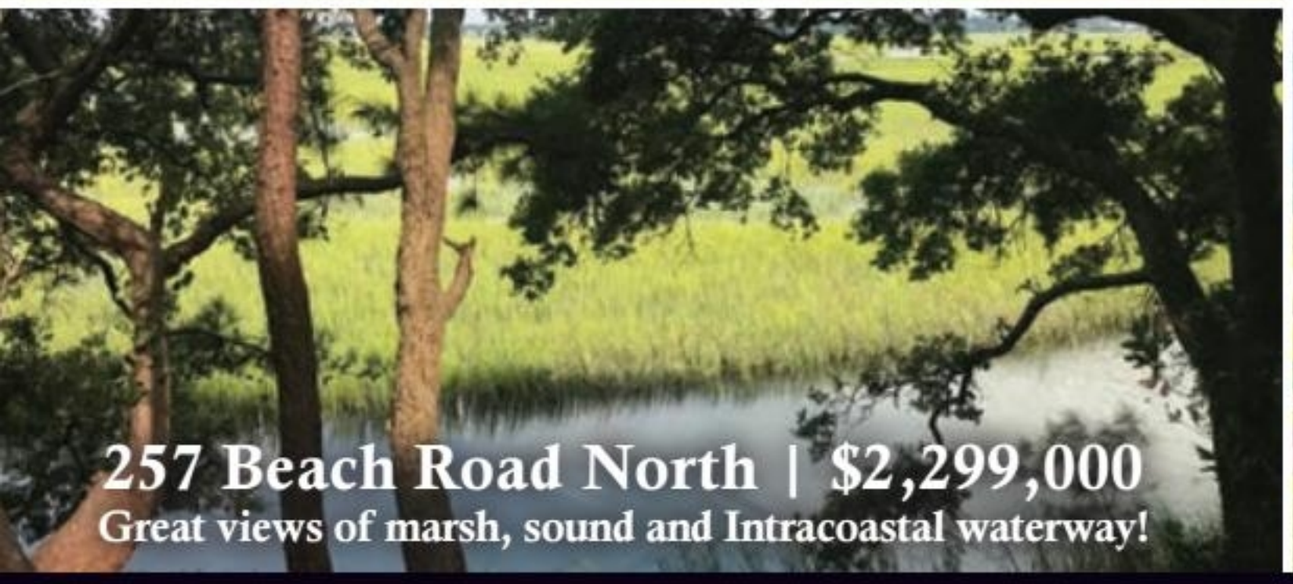

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